



Scientists sign for forest bans

Fiona Gowers
Port Douglas reporter

TWENTY world-renowned scientists have pleaded with Australia to stop development in the Daintree Rainforest.

In a letter to Prime Minister John Howard, Premier Peter Beattie and Douglas Shire Mayor Mike Berwick, the academics urge the preservation of the international biodiversity hotspot.

They also seek its inclusion in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

Those to put their signatures to the letter are: Andrew Beattie, Macquarie University; Stephen Blackmore, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh; Carla Catterall, Griffith University; Anne Ehrlich, Stanford University; Paul Ehrlich, Stanford University; Paul Gadek, James Cook University; Jiro Kikkawa, University of Queensland; Roger Kitching, Griffith University; Thomas Lovejoy, Heinz Centre Washington; Harold Mooney, Stanford University; Norman Myers, Oxford; Henry Nix, Emeritus Australian National University; Richard Pearson, James Cook University; Stuart

Pimm, Duke University; Peter Raven, Missouri Botanic Gardens; Harry Recher, Emeritus Edith Cowan University; Cristian Samper, Smithsonian Institution; Michael Soul, Emeritus University California Santa Cruz; Nigel Stork, Rainforest CRC; and George Woodwell, Woods Hole Research Center;

Meanwhile, the Australian Rainforest Foundation said regaining landholders' trust was the biggest challenge to conserve the Daintree rainforest.

The foundation's chief executive officer Roger Phillips said Douglas Shire Council's draft planning

the job of buying, consolidating, creating covenants and selling the land to create a revolving fund.

Mr Phillips said prices hinged on what willing sellers were prepared to accept the truest figure of market value.

He said foundation's tax deductible status meant some accepted prices significantly less than what their neighbour might.

Douglas Shire Mayor Mike Berwick said if the foundation undermined the council's draft planning scheme it may jeopardise State Government funding for the buy-back of Daintree properties.

Scheme had split the close-knit community.

He said the foundation knew control was needed but it opposed offering residents a single price instead of normal property negotiations.

"We have to win back the hearts and minds of residents in the Daintree, which is a big job," Mr Phillips said.

"We have to rebuild the goodwill of the people. They own the rainforest and need to be encouraged to conserve it."

In 2002, the foundation was given



Phillips: Douglas Shire Council plan has split the close-knit community.