

Ecotourism conference support call

THE Townsville City Council is inviting businesses, industry and community service groups to get behind the upcoming 2006 International Ecotourism Conference by providing support for the attendance of delegates from developing countries.

The Ecotourism Australia 2006 International Conference will take place at the Quality Hotel Southbank and Convention Centre from October 30 to November 3.

Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Sustainable Development Committee, Ann Bunnell, said while delegates from around the world would like to attend, many are unable to make the trip without financial support.

"Townsville is privileged to be hosting this event but in order to tap into the expertise of international eco-tourism operators, the region needs to extend a helping hand to those delegates who can't afford to attend, such as those from Africa and parts of the Asia-Pacific region," Cr Bunnell said.

"Many tourism operators and planners, protected area managers and academics are well versed in promoting tourism that allows people to experience natural areas in a way that fosters environmental and cultural appreciation.

"Our local tourism industry and our environment can only stand to benefit from their knowledge – in the same way that our expertise will be of great value to international delegates.

"Indeed, travellers are increasingly voting with their feet and demanding responsible and sustainable tourism."

The call for financial support has already been taken up by a number of businesses and agencies.

The Fleming family from the Billabong Sanctuary and Bungalow Bay has offered \$5000 towards the cost of flying and accommodating one or more delegates from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

The Burdekin Dry Tropics Board has also pledged \$25,000.

"Billabong Sanctuary and the Burdekin Dry Tropics Board have been very generous and with similar contributions from other organisations, I have no doubt the conference will be a great success," Cr Bunnell said.

Interested parties can call Environmental Management Services on 4727 9520.