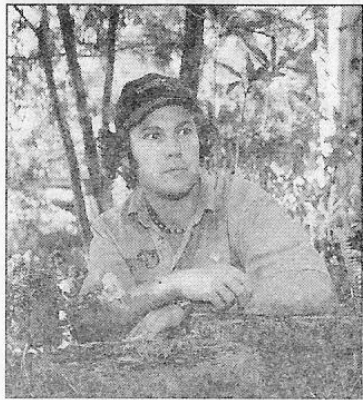


# Eco-friendly resort runs on sunshine



**THE RAY TO GO:** Hidden Valley's Ross McLennan

## Sonia Campbell

A NORTH Queensland retreat that runs on sunshine has become Australia's greenest resort.

Hidden Valley Cabins and Tours, nestled in the Paluma hinterland northwest of Townsville, is believed to be the first carbon-neutral tourist attraction in the nation.

Operated by the innovative and eco-conscious McLennan family, the retreat is run entirely on solar power, 24 hours

a day. "To our knowledge there is no (other) functioning resort that runs totally on solar power," operations manager Ross McLennan said.

"It's seriously unbelievable when you picture I'm sitting in the office now and I've got a cold-room running, restaurant, 10 (accommodation) units, bar and shop area, entertaining area and swimming pool."

Mr McLennan and his partner Chelsea Cox operate the resort with his parents, Ian and Bonnie, who bought and

redeveloped the business 21 years ago, creating an eco-friendly retreat for visitors.

The resort was powered by diesel generators but it was not long before the McLennans started toying with solar energy, initially developing smaller solar grids before aiming for 100 per cent transition.

"What we've done is eliminate the diesel generator which would have used up to 26,000 litres of diesel a year," Mr McLennan said.

State Tourism Minister

Desley Boyle said Hidden Valley Cabins had led the way in innovative and eco-friendly tourism operation.

"Their environmental initiatives will serve as an example for other Queensland operators and operators across Australia and indeed the world," Ms Boyle said.

The resort's \$190,000 stand-alone solar system was subsidised by 50 per cent through the State Government's Renewable Remote Power Generation Scheme.