

Media release



To coincide with the official opening of Hidden Valley Cabins on 4 April 2008

First fully carbon neutral resort leads the way says Ecotourism Australia

The Solar Eco Cabins and Interpretive Centre at Hidden Valley Cabins are an inspiration for the tourist industry and the community to follow, Stephen Pahl CEO of Ecotourism Australia said today.

“Hidden Valley Cabins is Australia’s first fully carbon neutral resort and tour business, and they have recently achieved Advanced Ecotourism Certification,” said Stephen.

“The official opening of the Solar Eco Cabins on 4 April is the culmination of the McLennan family’s commitment to environmental improvement over more than 20 years and they have achieved a model that should inspire the rest of the tourist industry and anyone interested in ways to reduce their carbon footprint.”

Visitors to Hidden Valley Cabins now not only enjoy a relaxing stay and awe-inspiring tours in the spectacular and pristine natural environment north of Townsville but can also visit the new Interpretative Centre that explains more about the solar technology used to power the resort.

Hidden Valley Cabins operations manager Ross McLennan said their carbon neutral milestone is another important step in the journey they began 22 years ago.

“Hidden Valley is not on grid power and, over the years, we have developed ways to decrease our reliance on generator power while making sure our guests enjoy all the comfort and facilities they need,” Ross said.

“Now, we are generating all of our own renewable energy and have saved 78 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.

“For the carbon emissions we cannot yet eradicate – such as those of deliveries to the resort and tour buses – we are buying carbon offsets,” Ross said.

On Friday 4 April, over 80 guests, including Brian Cuthine CEO Townsville City Council, Ben Callcot Mayor of Charter Towers and Shane Knuth MP Member for Charters Towers, visited the resort northwest of Townsville near Running River on the western slope of the Coastal Range in North Queensland. They celebrated the official opening and toured the Interpretative Centre.

Ecotourism Australia’s Stephen Pahl said other businesses, both within the tourist industry and beyond, should take up the challenge to reduce their emissions.

"I urge anyone responsible for a business to combine an unforgettable few days at this magnificent Queensland destination with a fact-finding mission to see how renewable energy can power all the essentials for comfort," Stephen said.

"Ecotourism Australia's world-leading ecotourism accreditation system has been challenging our industry to achieve measurable environmental results since it began 11 years ago and the ecotourism industry now has an important role in showcasing its solutions to the broader community.

"We congratulate Hidden Valley Cabins on their achievement and on opening a window for others to see how it's done," Stephen said.

Ecotourism Australia is the peak national body for the ecotourism industry in Australia. It aims to grow and promote ecotourism and to assist tourism operators to become environmentally sustainable, economically viable and socially and culturally responsible.

It is a non-profit organisation with membership that includes tour operators, ecotourism accommodation, tourism planners, protected area managers, academics and students, regional tourism associations and travellers.

Ecotourism Australia's certification program is a world first. It provides objective monitoring and auditing of organisations' ecotourism claims and provides travel agents and tourists with an assurance of best practice ecological sustainability, natural area management and quality ecotourism experiences.

ENDS

More information:

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Hidden Valley Cabins

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www.hiddenvalleytours.com.au

Photos

Hidden Valley Cabins high resolution photos are available at

<http://www.hiddenvalleycabins.com.au/MediaPage.htm>

See media invitation attached

MEDIA INVITATION TO ATTEND OFFICIAL OPENING

Journalists are invited to visit Hidden Valley Cabins for the official opening of the Solar Eco Cabins and Interpretative Centre on 4 April 2008.

A special bus transfer is available from Townsville.

WHERE: Hidden Valley Cabins

WHEN: Friday 4th April

TIME: 1:00 - 3:00 pm

A light meal and refreshments will be provided.

Bus transfer from Townsville will leave from Enterprise House Carpark at 10:45 a.m. and will return at 4:30 p.m.

Please RSVP to Ross McLennan if you would like to attend and confirm whether you need a place on bus.

PHONE: 1800 466509