



MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland resort Australia's first 100 percent solar powered and carbon neutral tourism operator

AN eco-friendly resort near Townsville has become the country's first 100 percent solar powered and carbon neutral tourism operator, in a move announced by Tourism Minister Desley Boyle today.

Ms Boyle congratulated Hidden Valley Cabins and Tours on the Paluma range - one and a half hours northwest of Townsville - for leading the nation in a crucial environmental initiative.

"I am delighted to announce that it is a Queensland tourism operation which has led the way on this important issue," Ms Boyle said.

"In Queensland we recognise that there must be an important balance between tourism interests and environmental issues and Hidden Valley Cabins is a prime example of a tourism operator striving to strike that balance.

"I congratulate operators Ian and Bonnie McLennan for their efforts in ensuring that not only the present beauty of their resort is protected, but the future is in good hands as well.

"I expect their environmental initiatives will serve not only as an example for other Queensland operators, but for tourism operators around Australia, and indeed, the world."

Touted as Australia's first solar powered resort, Hidden Valley Cabins and Tours has upped the ante to become the country's first carbon neutral tourism operator purchasing carbon credits and using alternative natural power sources to offset any green house gases which are released.

Hidden Valley Cabins and Tours has completed in-house audits following the guidelines set down by Climate Friendly and has just received its carbon neutral certificate.

The resort, which is Australia's first stand-alone operating with no support from a power grid, has introduced a range of carbon-friendly initiatives including replacing conventional light bulbs with energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs and minimising waste by compacting food and paper products for use in the garden.

Other green initiatives include educating guests and the public on the importance of protecting wildlife; building low impact walking tracks; recycling all aluminium cans, papers and cardboards; planting native trees and vegetation; and building with local timber.

The original Hidden Valley Cabins were established in 1982 to cater for timber cutters, tin miners and graziers in the area.

Ian and Bonnie McLennan bought the resort 21 years ago, demolishing the existing buildings and rebuilding the entire resort.

The frame work and roof trusses are made from selectively logged local hard wood, and the outside cladding on the buildings are railway sleeper off cuts which were commissioned to be burnt if not purchased by the McLennans.

The McLennans also undertook substantial revegetation to replace any native trees or plants lost in construction.

The resort is a multi-award winner, taking out top prize for both best Hosted Accommodation and New Tourism Development in the 2007 North Queensland Tourism Awards. It was also a finalist in the 2007 Queensland Tourism Awards for best Hosted Accommodation.

Situated near Running River on the western slope of the Paluma range, it is home to varying species of birds, butterflies, wallabies, lace monitors, platypus and nocturnal animals.

Earlier this year, Hidden Valley Cabins was a participant in the State Government, Queensland Tourism Industry Council and Tourism Queensland Pipeline Project aimed at providing business development assistance and mentoring.

The State Government partnered with Channel Nine's *Your Business Success* show to produce a Queensland tourism edition featuring Hidden Valley Cabins and another Townsville region operator – Herveys Range Heritage Team Rooms – which was aired in October.