



## 12.3 - Relative social & economic values of residents & tourists in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA)

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### Context

The WTWHA is famous for its wildlife, biodiversity & natural beauty. However, very little is known about the 'value' of these attributes, partly because it is quite challenging to quantify them. But, price is not synonymous with 'value' and there are a multiplicity of values associated with the environment.

### Aim

To improve our understanding of the relative importance of non-market values of the WTWHA to residents and tourists.



### Questionnaire design

#### Key sections of the resident survey:

- ❖ Background demographics & activities (e.g. walking, camping) in the WTWHA
- ❖ How important are the following to your overall quality of life? *examples*
  - ❖ Being able to see iconic species in the wild, visit waterfalls
  - ❖ Benefiting directly/indirectly from the incomes & jobs created by the rainforest-based tourism industry
  - ❖ Having healthy native flora & fauna, beautiful undeveloped scenery to look at
- ❖ How satisfied are you with...? *examples*
  - ❖ Your opportunities to see iconic species in the wild
  - ❖ The chances that the WTWHA will be preserved for future generations
- ❖ How would the following changes affect your overall quality of life? *examples*
  - ❖ If local prices rose by 20% compared to other places in Australia
  - ❖ If there was half as much chance of seeing an iconic animal
  - ❖ If there were fewer native flora & fauna to look at
- ❖ How much would you be willing to pay to: protect native flora & fauna; improve/maintain undeveloped scenic beauty; improve water quality/clarity

### Methods & timelines

The project started in July 2012.

#### Progress to date:

- ✓ Conducted literature review
- ✓ Organized a workshop with key stakeholders to identify key 'values' for assessment & development 'changes' that may erode those values
- ✓ Developed two draft questionnaires targeting tourists & residents respectively
- ✓ Currently working with the Rainforest Aboriginal People's Alliance (RAPA) to refine questionnaires

#### What's next? From July 2013 onwards:

- ❖ Mail out questionnaires to residents in & around the WTWHA – across 46 postcodes
- ❖ Work with RAPA to collect data from Indigenous communities in & around the WTWHA

From July 2014

- ❖ Analyze data to explore the extent to which measures of the importance of different values (and satisfaction with those values) differs across residents & tourists
- ❖ Compare & contrast different valuation approaches
- ❖ Use insights to identify priorities for conservation & marketing

#### Key sections of the tourist survey:

- ❖ Similar attributes to resident survey, but tailor-made to suit tourists. *Examples*
  - ❖ Asking about Importance of various factors as a reason for coming to the region (rather than for overall quality of life)
  - ❖ Expenditure data
  - ❖ Asking how 'changes' (e.g. higher prices, fewer iconic animals) would affect trip duration (rather than overall quality of life)

### Expected outcome

The project will generate information about:

- ❖ What residents & tourists think are the most & least important attributes of the WTWHA (e.g. forest health, landscape, iconic species)
- ❖ Which goods/services tourist & residents are least satisfied with, thereby identifying potential areas for improvement
- ❖ The potential impacts on resident satisfaction or tourist revenues of degradation of a range of environmental goods & services (e.g. reduction in water quality/clarity, unmanaged development impacting on the scenic beauty)
- ❖ Willingness to pay to improve 'problems'
- ❖ Different methodologies for prioritizing or 'valuing' attributes.

