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Friday August 30 2013

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Kerry Larsen
 Journalist, The Newport

\$1.4M pledged for Botanic Garden



Mossman Botanic Garden's committee (L-R) John Anich, Marcus Anderson, Alan Carle, Peter Cook and Frank Frikker with Warren Entsch (centre). Absent: Tony Goodall.

\$1.4 million has been pledged by the Coalition to develop the proposed Mossman Botanic Garden should it win next weekend's Federal Election.

Liberal National Member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch MP, said the landmark local investment would help bring about the rejuvenation of Mossman and increase tourism numbers to the town.

"This is incredible news for the community," Mr Entsch said. "Mossman is a thriving agricultural town, but tourists tend to pass through and go to Mossman Gorge Visitor Centre or the Daintree.

"As the only botanic garden focused on publicly showcasing unique plants from Australia's Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, this will be a world-class scientific facility.

"And due to its uniqueness, it'll also be a major tourism drawcard for the 100,000-plus visitors to the region to spend extended time and money in Mossman itself - the benefits will extend far beyond Mossman to Cairns and Port Douglas."

The proposed garden is set to feature a Wet Tropics arboretum, themed gardens, an interpretation centre, a research facility, entertainment areas, community facilities, and the Betty Hinton Art Centre, a botanical art gallery within the grounds dedicated to the world-renowned local artist, Betty Hinton.

President of the Mossman Botanic Garden committee, Alan Carle, said the township of Mossman was one step closer to realising their Botanic Garden should the Coalition win government next weekend.

"When constructed, the garden will contain Australia's only arboretum focused on Australia's Wet Tropics World Heritage rainforests, which will attract eco-tourists, scientists, and students from around the world," Mr Carle, who designed part of Singapore's world-famous botanic gardens, said.

"The benefits to Mossman will be significant. Visitors will stay longer in Mossman and the Douglas region, learn and spend more, and act to increase investor confidence in this region."

Of the pledged \$1.4 million, \$1.2 million would be used to purchase the first property for the Garden and \$200,000 allocated to planning, design and grants in 2014. Mr Carle said negotiations on the purchase of a property close to Mossman were in the final stages.

"Depending on election outcomes, when seed funding has been received, we will be in a strong position to seek and attract larger benefactor funding from non-government and government organisations, both internationally and within Australia," he said. "Our plan has always been to obtain investment from a range of benefactors, as well as ongoing revenue via eco-tourism, scientific, educational, and other commercial endeavours.

"All in all, we feel this pledge is very positive step for the creation of Mossman's Botanic Garden."

The Mossman Botanic Garden Inc. Committee is made up of six local scientific, business and tourism identities, and aims to plan, fund, construct, operate, and grow the MBG into a self-funding entity within five years.

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