



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2025

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Chairman Message

Thank you for being part of another remarkable year of impact.

The Rainforest Conservation Foundation may be a small organisation, but our ambition for the Wet Tropics of Far North Queensland remains bold. Every tree planted, every student inspired, and every hectare restored is only possible because of your belief in the work we do.

This year, our conservation team continued to advance our core mission: to save, restore and protect rainforest habitat throughout the Wet Tropics, with a current focus on the Daintree region.

Building on decades of restoration work, we have secured Commonwealth approval to return thirteen properties, more than 90 hectares, to protected status, including over 22 hectares already restored to native rainforest through the planting of more than 100,000 trees sourced and propagated in our Diwan nursery. The legacy being created here will last for generations.

Alongside restoration, education and community engagement remain a central priority. Under the guidance of our Chief Conservation Officer, our programs welcomed students from across Australia, giving young people the opportunity to understand, and to fall in love with, the rainforest ecosystem. By nurturing this connection, we are investing in the next generation of environmental stewards.

This year also saw several transformational investments that strengthen our capacity to deliver impact.

- Through funding from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, we completed the upgrade of our Emerald Waters facility, now operating as a dedicated Education & Engagement Centre.
- We also received funding under the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's 2023–24 Environmental Recovery Package, supporting recovery and reforestation work following severe weather impacts associated with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper and subsequent rainfall events.

The Wet Tropics region experienced multiple periods of extreme rainfall and flooding throughout 2025, the latest in a series of climate-driven disruptions.

These events caused erosion, loss of seedlings in some newly planted areas, and restricted access to field sites for weeks at a time.

While challenging, they also reinforced why rainforest restoration matters: healthy rainforests stabilise soil, reduce flood impact, and support biodiversity resilience during climate extremes. Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is shaping how conservation must be done today.

Despite the weather, our team continued to make progress on walking trails, student learning spaces, seed collection and nursery development. Behind the scenes, grant applications, regulatory compliance, stakeholder engagement and community partnerships kept momentum strong.

Our path forward is ambitious. We are scaling towards large-area reforestation that can restore hundreds, eventually thousands, of hectares without drawing from existing native seed banks.

By working collaboratively with corporate partners, government agencies and regional communities, we are laying the foundation for a replicable model of conservation that can be used well beyond the Daintree.

Thank you for your commitment, generosity and belief in the work we do. Together, we are protecting one of the most unique ecosystems on Earth, for today, and for future generations.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Gellert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anthony Gellert
Board Chairman, Rainforest Conservation Foundation

Building Resilience in the Daintree

In December 2023, Ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper made landfall in Far North Queensland, bringing widespread flooding, landslides and debris across the Wet Tropics and the Daintree Rainforest.

The impact was significant, causing vegetation loss, erosion, damaged creek lines and restricted access to walking tracks and conservation sites.



To support the recovery effort, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) established the Environmental Recovery Package: Local Conservation and Clean-up after Cyclone Jasper, providing funding to organisations working directly on restoring natural ecosystems.

Through this program, the Rainforest Conservation Foundation received \$100,000 to:

- clean up cyclone debris across two of our rainforest reserves (Benella and Emerald Waters)
- re-establish damaged walking trails used for education and engagement programs
- plant 5,000 native rainforest trees at 9 Turpentine Road to strengthen a cassowary habitat corridor and improve waterway resilience leading into Cooper Creek and eventually the Great Barrier Reef



Despite continued heavy rainfall and restricted access to field sites in early 2025, we have achieved significant progress, particularly within the cassowary corridor and riparian zones feeding into the Great Barrier Reef catchment. Achievements to date include:

- debris removal and restoration works at Benella Rainforest Reserve
- trail resurfacing and sand-laying at Emerald Waters Education & Engagement Centre
- 3,380 trees planted of the planned 5,000

The newly planted trees are already contributing to:

- strengthening cassowary movement pathways
- stabilising riverbanks and reducing sediment flow into reef-connected waterways
- improving flood and cyclone resilience during future severe weather events

This project demonstrates how strategic reforestation not only repairs damage today, it protects the rainforest for tomorrow.



Enhancing Our Education and Engagement Centre

Proudly funded by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund

Education is at the heart of long-term conservation. The more people who experience the rainforest firsthand, the more future decision-makers will understand its value and advocate for its protection.

To strengthen our ability to deliver education programs on site, we were awarded a \$100,000 grant through the Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF). The GCBF is Queensland's largest one-off community grants program, designed to support not-for-profit organisations to improve community facilities and services.

This funding allowed us to upgrade our Education and Engagement Centre at Emerald Waters Reserve, transforming it into a functional, safe and sustainable space for school groups, volunteers, researchers and community partners.

Key improvements delivered through the grant included:

- installation of solar panels and battery storage, reducing generator use and enabling renewable, off-grid power
- replacement of the shed roof, increasing weatherproofing and ventilation
- fit-out of ceiling fans, lighting, switchboard upgrades and circuit installation, improving safety and usability
- installation of compostable toilets, complete with handwashing areas, plumbing and environmentally responsible waste management

These improvements mean our programs can now operate more frequently, more comfortably and more sustainably. We can host larger school groups, facilitate longer student workshops, and deliver after-dark engagement activities such as guided night walks.

The Education and Engagement Centre is now a welcoming space that supports curiosity, learning and connection to the rainforest. This upgrade is already helping young people and visitors to experience the rainforest in a meaningful way and will continue to serve the community for many years to come.



Director Spotlight: Lochie Bown



Lochie joined the Rainforest Conservation Foundation Board in 2024 after working with the organisation during a consulting project focused on scaling reforestation in the Daintree Rainforest.

“*The most impactful project I’ve worked on so far was the project with Rainforest Conservation Foundation.*”
– Lochie Bown

At the time, he was supporting RCF through the Oliver Wyman for Society program, where he helped design a pilot project exploring drone-assisted planting and nature-based carbon funding. What began as a professional engagement quickly became something more meaningful.

On his first trip to the Daintree, Lochie was struck by its ancient biodiversity.

“What struck me was the diversity of plants and animals that call the Daintree home. It was just spectacular.”

With a background in finance and experience across investment banking, consumer foods, pharmaceuticals and consulting,

Lochie now applies his strategic and financial expertise to support RCF’s growth and long-term sustainability.

Although he is one of the newest and youngest members of the Board, he brings a strong belief that action matters more than credentials.

“The environment is important, but what is more important is playing an active role in helping fix the problem.”

Lochie’s passion, curiosity and commitment to impact continue to guide his contribution to RCF and to the future of the Wet Tropics.

Partner Profile: Infuse Travel

Empowering the next generation of rainforest guardians

At Rainforest Conservation Foundation, we believe that meaningful conservation starts with understanding. When young people experience the rainforest firsthand, its extraordinary biodiversity, its complexity, its fragility, they don't just learn about conservation. They feel it.

This is why our partnership with Infuse Travel, a leading Australian student travel organisation specialising in service-learning and experiential education, is so powerful. Together, we bring students from across Australia into the heart of the Wet Tropics to learn, participate and contribute to real conservation outcomes.

Through our Student Engagement Program, students explore our Benella Rainforest Reserve, walk through ancient forest systems and witness the rainforest's resilience and vulnerability. Led by our Chief Conservation Officer, Adrian "Golly" Watson, students learn how reforestation supports biodiversity, strengthens cassowary corridors and protects reef-connected waterways.

The students don't just observe, they take part. They plant native trees, learn seed propagation techniques and contribute to restoration work that has a direct and lasting impact.

Infuse Travel captured this connection beautifully in their recent short film featuring Mentone Grammar students participating in the Reef and Rainforest Program. With two World Heritage sites as their classroom, students listened, learned and rolled up their sleeves to contribute to hands-on conservation in the Daintree Rainforest and on the Great Barrier Reef.

By partnering with Infuse Travel, we are empowering young people to become environmental stewards, future leaders who carry an understanding of the rainforest's importance and a passion to protect it.

Together, we are not just teaching conservation. We are shaping the custodians of tomorrow.

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Education in action like this not only inspires the next generation but also makes a real difference on the ground.” – Rainforest Conservation Foundation