

# Sustainability Case Studies



## Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, Cairns

[www.skyrail.com.au](http://www.skyrail.com.au)

Skyrail is a cableway located in Cairns and stretches over 7.5km of beautiful rainforest. The rail is designed to take its guests deep into the lush rainforest and through the canopy for an unforgettable experience. There are two major stops on the rail that allow its guests to enjoy the breathtaking views the rainforest has to offer. Along the journey, experienced guides educate the guests about the rainforest, as well as teaching them about the Aboriginal people who once inhabited the land. The rail has been active since 1994 and has been awarded for its commitment to the environment since its opening year.



However, these achievements would not have been possible without exceptionally detailed pre-construction planning and research. The makers of this innovative concept had only one thing in mind when building the Skyrail; to provide people with education and access to one of Australia's most beautiful rainforests without compromising the environment. In fact, in 2005 Skyrail developed its Rainforest Foundation, which raises and distributes funds to support educational projects and rainforest research funds.

Skyrail is the first tourist attraction in the world to be Benchmarked and Certified under the International Green Globe program, with the EarthCheck science inside in 2002, and is the only company in Australia to retain EarthCheck Certification till this day.

### 1. Getting started

Skyrail was developed with the environment in mind; to provide the public with access to the rainforest without compromising its integrity. In 1987, seven years before construction commenced, Skyrail's concept was created. During this seven year period, the concept was thoroughly researched and studied for feasibility and environmental impact. Since its opening in 1994, Skyrail has been recognised for its contribution to the environment locally, nationally and internationally. Winning countless awards for eco-sustainability and sustainable tourism, Skyrail has become a benchmark for exceptional eco-sustainable tourism.

### 2. Major initiatives

#### Environmental Management

The business operates under an Environmental Management System (EMS), which is internationally certified. The EMS includes a range of characteristics of the business including energy consumption, waste management, water consumption use of pesticides and cleaning products, etc. The Environmental officer, who is employed by the business, oversees the EMS and all environmental certifications.

## Environmental Awareness

Staff awareness is another important initiative. The staff undergo extensive training before they are allowed to commence work or even enter the rainforest. Teaching the staff about how to effectively be environmentally friendly is an important way to set an example for visitors but also to ensure the best possible outcomes for the business. All contractors are also extensively briefed on environmental regulations and expectations by attending the Environmental Education Course. Visitors are educated about the rainforest and the environment as they travel through the rainforest by experienced and passionate guides. This education is an important part of the Skyrail experience and encourages visitors to be environmentally conscience.

## Environmental Contributions

In constant pursuit of environmental protection and education, Skyrail developed the Rainforest Foundation in 2005. This Foundation is a part of the Australian Government's Register of Environmental Organisations. It is active in raising money for tropical rainforest research and environmental educational projects and it distributes this money evenly between these important causes. In 2006, Skyrail announced a \$50 000 contribution to several research initiatives who are known as Skyrail Rainforest Foundation Cyclone Larry Project.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland's Planet Safe Partnership was launched in 2007 and Skyrail was the first tourist attraction to be endorsed. The Planet Safe Partnership is an initiative which recognises businesses that demonstrate excellence in environmental stability in Tropical North Queensland.

## 3. Key outcomes

One of the major benefits of the construction of the cableway was the development of new building techniques and concepts. The thick rainforest accompanied by environmental regulations meant that new techniques had to be created. These concepts were developed and implemented, which resulted in fewer environmental impacts than ever thought possible. The creation of these new concepts has meant that similar businesses have the opportunity to implement eco-sustainable techniques within their businesses.

The outcomes of Skyrail have been major. Not only is it an attractive tourist destination, it is also an educational experience. One of the greatest positives that have come out of Skyrail is the environmental education that guests gain from the experience. A James Cook University survey in 1997 identified that guests and visitors gained sufficient knowledge about the rainforest and the environment.

Skyrail's dedication and contribution to the environment have been recognised since its opening in 1994. These are some of the major awards they have received:

- a. Winner of the 'Best Tourist Development Project' for Queensland Tourism in 1996
- b. Winner of the 'Best Tourist Development Project' for Australian Tourism in 1996
- c. Winner of the Queensland Tourism Award for 'Best Major Tourist Attraction' in 1997/98/99
- d. Winner of the Australian Tourism Awards for 'Best Major Tourist Attraction in 1997
- e. Winner of the Tropical North Queensland Tourism Award for 'Best Major Tourist Attraction in 1998/2001/03
- f. Inducted into the Queensland Tourism Awards Hall of Fame in the category of 'Best Major Tourist Attraction' in 2000
- g. Winner of the British Airways 'Tourism for Tomorrow' Award and 'International Eco-Tourism' Award in 2000
- h. Winner of Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism at the Queensland Tourism Awards 2008/9
- i. Winner of Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism at the Australian Tourism Awards 2009/10

- j. Winner of the Greening Business Tourism Award for 'Most Environmentally Conscious Visitor Attraction' which was presented at the European Business Travel and Meeting Exhibition in Geneva, Switzerland.

#### **4. Major challenges**

Building an environmentally sustainable company within a rainforest is always challenging and the Skyrail was no exception. The construction of the cableway needed to be carefully planned to meet environmental regulations. The company itself wanted to build the cableway with as little impact on the environment as possible. These challenges were overcome after a long 7 year planning period to ensure the best possible outcome with as little impact on the environment as possible.

#### **5. Next steps**

Skyrail has been at the forefront of conservation and preservation of endangered species and habitats. The attraction has, through its Cyclone Larry Project, been planning and helping the cassowary population survive and thrive through the cyclone season through the conservation of their habitat. Project results have ensured that many endangered species are a major priority in the future, especially in the cyclone season. The future of Skyrail is not only to protect the environment, but the animals which inhabit the beautiful rainforest.

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