

Bedlam - James Cook University - Cairns Campus Student Assoc

# Environment Group News

September 1998

## Paper Making Goes Bananas "JCU Might Help"

Paper, boxes and bags will be made out of banana stalks and banana tree fibre in a new \$1 million paper manufacturing plant to be set up in Tully. The pilot plant is set to be operational by June 1999. It is hoped, James Cook University will assist in future research.

The University of Adelaide's Business Initiatives Graduates (BIG) program has entered a joint venture with the North Qld Banana Growers Co-operative Association at Tully to produce high quality paper, boxes and bags, which will be 3000 times stronger than paper.

Papyrus Australia Pty Ltd, set up by Ramy Azer, a 27 year old engineering graduate from the University of Adelaide, will be investing \$1 million dollars in the manufacturing plant.

Mr Azer has used the ancient Egyptian papyrus-making techniques as a basis of LFT (Long Fibre Technology) - the method used to produce paper from agricultural waste.

"LFT is easily transferrable to sugar cane and many other plants as diverse as rubber, corn, hibiscus and some kinds of palm trees", said Mr Azer. Mr Azer said that bananas and sugar cane have the advantage of being produced on a massive scale world-wide, providing a low-cost raw material from wastes that are currently discarded.

Mr David Wharton, General Manager of the North Qld Banana Growers Co-op, said that this project has the potential to solve long-standing environmental problems as well as increase the profitability of banana farms in the Tully/Innisfail area.

The Co-operative has been supplying banana stalks to Papyrus Australia free for 18 months. "Provided we can get the banana trunk itself, down to Adelaide quickly enough, before it oxidises, he can make a paper like white bleached paper, without using any bleach", said Mr Wharton.

Mr Azer said Papyrus Australia Pty Ltd will be concentrating on the manufacture of food packaging paper, boxes and bags as this is where demand and therefore profits are greatest. "There are many manufactures in America and Europe who are willing to pay a premium for bleach-free packaging paper, as used in the food, health product and cosmetic industry", said Mr Azer.

Photocopy paper will not be made at the plant, due to be uneconomical cost of production when compared to the cost of bleached native forest paper, such as Reflex. "Now we can produce A4 sheets of printer/copy paper for 1 cent per 20 sheets, but this is still a low profit area compared to packaging - when you look at it on a global scale", said Mr Azer.

"I use evil, bleached paper, because there is no alternative, and when I have a customer wanting to pay \$10 per sheet to package tea, it is just not economical to make copy paper", Mr Azer explained. Mr Azer said that once Papyrus Australia was established, he estimates the manufacturing of copy /printer paper will happen within five years. "It all depends on customer support", he said.

Mr Azer said that Papyrus Australia also hope to get some co-operation from James Cook University within the areas of research and development for Long Fibre Technology.

The project has been assisted by a two-year \$212,753 competitive research and development of industry grant from the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (DIST).



## Consideration of Objections by Council has been Extended for 60 days

You CAN still make a difference. FAX your State Government member and/or Cairns City Councillors (40 443022), to lodge your expression of concern over the proposed passing of the Development Control Plan. Labor Govt. Policy - DCP would not be gazetted by the State minister.

## Save Trinity Inlet

The Cairns City Council's Development Control Plan for the greater East Trinity area will be the most momentous planning decision in the city's history, and will give the green light to Queensland's largest coastal development.

It will mean an eventual bridge across Trinity Inlet. All of this is in contravention of both the FNQ 2010 planning process and the council's present strategic plan.

Only recently, the community welcomed the State Government's declaration of a fish habitat protection area adjacent to East Trinity. However, there appears to be an inevitable collision course between inlet protection and the council's wish to allow a mirror image city on the eastern side. The bottom line is that our under-resourced council is far out of its depth with this DCP.

The waters on the eastern side of Trinity Inlet are listed as "pristine" by water quality studies of the Trinity Inlet Management Plan. Protecting the inlet is good for its ecology, good for recreational fishing enthusiasts and beneficial for locals and visitors.

In addition, protecting East Trinity sends a clear message that we are serious about preserving the natural assets that make Cairns such a special place, and help keep us employed sustainably.

It is imperative that the community, through its elected representatives, utterly reject this DCP. - Pat Daly, Michael Bryan, Jonathan Metcalft, Denis Walls, Cally Densmore, Peter Hitchcock, on behalf of Save Trinity Inlet ('Letters to the Editor' - Cairns Post 5/9/98)