

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7AM QLD TIME THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY

Media release

Cairns tourism takes massive hit due to mining boom

A new analysis by The Australia Institute, a public policy think tank, reveals that over the past decade tourism to Far North Queensland has slumped on the back of the mining boom driving up the Australian dollar.

The Institute's Public Engagement Officer Mark Ogge said the analysis shows that over the past ten years global tourism has boomed, with tourist numbers increasing by around 20 per cent. Yet, over the same period, the number of international tourists coming to Far North Queensland has dropped massively by 25 per cent.

"This isn't because the reef is suddenly less beautiful, or that the region's tourist operators are doing something wrong," said Mr Ogge.

"It is because international tourists are faced with the high Australian dollar which has been driven up by the mining boom. The simple truth is that the boom has made Far North Queensland a far more expensive tourist destination, which is costing local jobs and businesses.

"Blessed with the Great Barrier Reef, extraordinary rainforests and excellent tourism operators, Tropical Far North Queensland including the Cairns region should be experiencing an unprecedented boom.

"Yet, the number of international visitors coming to the region has slumped by 25 per cent, which is around 260,000 fewer tourists per year," said Mr Ogge.

Not only is Australia a less attractive place to visit because of the high exchange, but the high exchange rate is also making foreign tourist destinations more attractive to Australians. This means instead of holidaying at home, Australians are heading overseas in greater numbers.

"Research has shown that Australians overestimate the positive economic effects of the mining boom, whilst giving little consideration to the economic costs," said Mr Ogge.

A free public forum, "*Reef at Risk: Coal Mining and the Great Barrier Reef*", will be held by local organisation Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC) on Thursday 7 February, featuring speakers from The Australia Institute and Greenpeace, from 6pm Pullman Reef Hotel Casino, Cairns.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Mark Ogge 0421 272 884