Land buy-back support

CONSERVATIONISTS' calls for a land buy-back to save Mission Beach rainforest from development have been backed by Cassowary Coast Regional Council's Mayor and tourism leaders.

Residents lobbying against a subdivision in rainforest at Wongaling Beach say a buy-back scheme, similar to the one in the Daintree region, is needed to preserve both vital wildlife corridors and the essence of the beachside tourist town.

This week, Mayor Bill Shannon backed calls for a smaller-scale buy-back.

"There are a handful of strategic parcels of land in Mission Beach where a buy-back would be appropriate; it wouldn't be anything like the huge buy-back in the Daintree but it is needed," Cr Shannon said.

"We've got to secure linkages (between forested areas). We certainly don't want to lose any more rainforest but at the moment people do have existing rights over their land."

Mission Beach lobby group C4 intensified its calls for a buy-back program this week after learning developers had a new subdivision plan for a rainforest property at Wongaling Beach that attracted national attention last year.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett exercised little-used powers in July to stop a subdivision from going ahead on the land which

Vital wildlife link: Liz Gallie.

he described as a vital cassowary corridor.

Matthew Manton, from Wilmat Holdings, said the subdivision had been reduced from 40 to 26 lots, three cassowary corridors had been included and a section of road would be closed for revegetation.

"This has become far from a profitable exercise," Mr Manton said.

But C4 spokeswoman Liz Gallie maintains the block is a crucial wildlife link between bordering World Heritage rainforest and low-land coastal forest, that should remain untouched.

Mission Beach Business and Tourism's chairman John Hill believes a buy-back scheme is the perfect scenario.

"There's enough available land that we should be able to stay away from certain areas, but landowners have spent their money in good faith," he said.