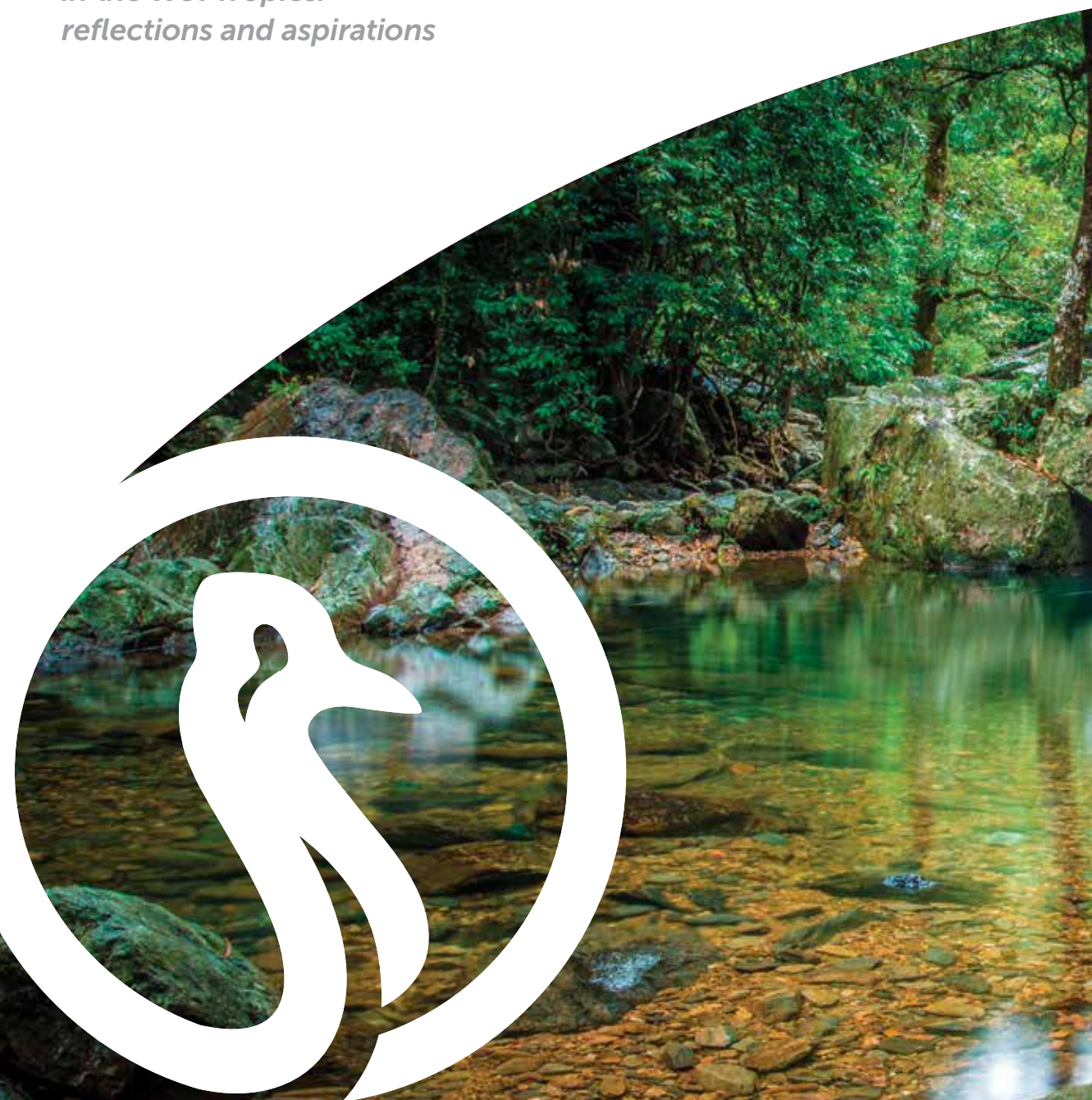


STATE OF WET TROPICS 2017-2018

*30 years of World Heritage
in the Wet Tropics:
reflections and aspirations*





Southern cassowary
(Wet Tropics Images / Matt Cornish)



STATE OF WET TROPICS 2017-2018

30 years of World Heritage
in the Wet Tropics:
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Purpose of the report

This State of Wet Tropics report satisfies the requirements of Queensland's *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* and *Financial Accountability Act 2009*; and the Commonwealth's *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Conservation Act 1994*.

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Disclaimer

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Davies Creek (Wet Tropics Images / Charlotte Hellings)

Executive summary

In the 30 years since the Wet Tropics of Queensland was inscribed on the World Heritage list, much has changed in terms of attitudes towards its listing and broader natural resource management issues such as climate change.

World Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics

The World Heritage Convention aims to protect places that are so significant—of such outstanding universal value—that their permanent protection is of the highest importance to humanity.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area was inscribed on the World Heritage list on 9 December 1988. It is one of an elite group of World Heritage properties listed for all four natural criteria (UNESCO, 1988).

Some 32% of Australia's terrestrial fauna species (many of which occur nowhere else) are found in the Area, which comprises less than 0.2% of the continent. These rainforests are globally significant relics of the great Gondwanan forests that covered Australia 50 to 100 million years ago.

While there was little doubt about the natural values of the Area, the journey towards World Heritage listing was complex, controversial and had strong involvement of communities—both in support of and against the proposed listing. Particularly, the permanent protection of the forests signalled an end to logging, giving rise to concerns about economic decline in regional areas. Political division, protests, blockades and even civil disobedience characterised a decade-long struggle that resulted in significant social, economic and environmental effects across the region.

For Rainforest Aboriginal people, there was apprehension about the impacts of World Heritage on their rights of self-determination, with no tangible benefits evident. While the cultural and spiritual values of the land are inextricably linked with its natural values, the listing did not recognise the cultural landscape and biocultural values they had managed for generations.

Once the World Heritage Area was declared, the Wet Tropics Management Authority was established to ensure Australia meets its obligation to the World Heritage Convention. The Queensland and Australian governments entered into a Wet Tropics Management Scheme in 1990, agreeing to joint funding and management arrangements. They established the Authority to work in partnership with the community

as a means of building a sense of ownership and sharing both the benefits and burdens of sound management.

30 years on: a place worth celebrating

Much has changed and been achieved over the last 30 years, but importantly the outstanding universal values that inspired the World Heritage listing in the first place have been conserved (IUCN, 2017). The Area offers breathtaking beauty, incredible species endemism and diversity, along with biocultural and spiritual values.

While first viewed as overly bureaucratic and, at times, unresponsive to demands, the Authority has grown to become an integral part of the community it serves, working across the spectrum of interests towards community and World Heritage goals.

Since the signing of an historic Regional Agreement in 2005, relationships between Rainforest Aboriginal people and the Authority have matured, although a number of the commitments under the Agreement have yet to be fully implemented.

The World Heritage Area plays an important role in the life of the community, whether through culture, recreation, employment or simply the quality of life that comes from living in such an aesthetically enjoyable place.

Securing the future—the next 30 years

Whilst managing the World Heritage Area has always been complex, the Authority must address the social, economic and environmental issues and challenges anticipated for the next 30 years—of which there are many.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is climate change. With changes to species distribution and density having already been recorded—and some somber predictions of modelled effects—there will be a critical need for science-based solutions, advocacy by informed communities and substantial resources to improve the resilience of the Area.

Invasive species will continue to cause impact. Existing problems, like feral pigs, and emerging new ones, like myrtle rust, will require collaborative effort and resources to manage impacts. Multi-faceted strategies like the highly effective Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program will form the basis of whole of community, rapid-response approaches to pest management.

Urban growth in the region is expected to double to more than 700,000 people in the next 20 years, putting further pressure on the natural environment and increasing demand for infrastructure like roads, dams and energy supply. This growth could potentially sever wildlife corridors, causing species isolation and limiting their ability to respond to change.

Tourism plays an increasingly important role in presenting the Area to visitors and it will evolve to provide even more diverse experiences, distributing visitation across a wider area and extending the length of stay in the region. This will bring economic and employment growth, but also increase the need for infrastructure.

The challenge is to plan for future changes without endangering World Heritage values. Ensuring these values, our economy and the wider community are protected from negative effects will need considered planning and regulation as well as the support, and

partnership, of the Wet Tropics community. The people of the Wet Tropics are one of the Area's greatest assets, with a strong record of stewardship, which, in the case of Rainforest Aboriginal people, stems back thousands of years.

With native title either resolved, or in the process of being resolved, across 87.5% of the Area and the first Wet Tropics land tenure resolution process underway, it is foreseeable that in the next 30 years, large parts of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area will be either solely or jointly managed by Traditional Owners. From this will come increased economic opportunities—through tourism, ranger programs and use of cultural resources—and the official recognition of responsibility for country, consistent with traditional practices over thousands of years.

Our committed Wet Tropics community, together with collaborative government support and a dedicated management authority, unite to give optimism for the coming 30 years.



Fan palms at Cooper Creek Wilderness (TTNQ Images)

Introduction

Each year, the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) produces a report to inform the community and stakeholders on the integrity and state of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area).

This report reflects on the events leading up to the listing, provides insight into the changes in our Wet Tropics community since that time, and looks to the next 30 years. We are grateful to be able to share the recollections of a number of people from the years immediately following the listing, as well as some future aspirations of the Wet Tropics community.

9 December 2018 marks 30 years since the inscription of the Wet Tropics of Queensland on the World Heritage list. Now is an opportune time to reflect on the events that led to the listing and the changes since, and to consider aspirations for the Area over the next 30 years.

The road to World Heritage listing was complex and controversial. Proponents and opponents were numerous, and passionately vocal. Some who opposed the World Heritage listing now acknowledge what World Heritage status has brought to the region, while others remain sceptical of its worth and the means by which it was achieved. Importantly, 30 years later the outstanding universal values that supported World Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics have been conserved and are deeply entrenched in the lives and lifestyles of residents.

For the Authority in particular, a focus will be to strengthen community relations and empower Wet Tropics stakeholders to work together for the 'protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation and transmission to future generations' of the World Heritage Area (*Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*).

After all, World Heritage is our promise to the future.



Mossman Gorge day use area (Paul Curtis Images)

The history of settlement in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area



Rainforest Aboriginal people

Rainforest Aboriginal people have been living in the rainforests of the Wet Tropics region for many thousands of years. Prior to European settlement, the Wet Tropics rainforests were one of the most populated areas of Australia, and the only area where Indigenous Australians lived permanently in the rainforest. Rainforest Aboriginal people's environment provided everything— spirituality, identity, social order, shelter, food and medicine. Their cultural and spiritual beliefs are intertwined with the natural features of their country. Those values, and their importance to the management of the World Heritage Area, persist today.

On 9 November 2012, the property was included on the National Heritage listing for its Indigenous values. The listing recognised that "Rainforest Aboriginal people were able to permanently occupy the Wet Tropics because they had developed techniques which allowed them to exploit toxic plants throughout the year. The majority of calories consumed by Rainforest Aboriginal people came from toxic plants. They processed and ate at least 14 native toxic plants—a greater use than anywhere

else in Australia—and developed more complex techniques for processing toxic plants than anywhere elsewhere in Australia. Remains of toxic plants eaten by Rainforest Aboriginal people have been recovered from excavations of rockshelters and date to about 3,500 years ago.

Rainforest Aboriginal people developed a unique material culture that enabled them to utilise the plant and other resources on which they relied. This includes a set of distinctive stone tools including: an ovate or rectangular grooved slab associated with a crushing stone; an anvil stone pitted with small hollows and accompanied by a hammer stone; polished waisted stone axes called *ooyurkas*, and bicornual baskets. In addition to the use of this unique material culture, fire management was essential for Rainforest Aboriginal people's permanent occupation of the rainforest in the Wet Tropics region. This includes the use of fire to convert patches of rainforest into open forest and the placing of hot coals at the base of lawyer vines to kill them so walking tracks and camp sites are kept clear. Both of these techniques are unique to the Wet Tropics region." (Australian Government, 2012).

European settlement

The first European explorers to the region, such as Edmund Kennedy and Christie Palmerston, characterised the Wet Tropics rainforests as jungle, bush or bastard scrub (Francis, 1929). For the colonisers, the rainforests of the region stood as uncultivated spaces, in contrast to the desired patchwork of settlements (Parnell, 2008).

George Dalrymple led the first comprehensive exploration of the coastal Wet Tropics in 1873. The primary purpose of the expedition was to discover agricultural lands. He reported on a 'Northern Eldorado' and a 'great coast basin' with 'soil unsurpassed by any in the world... all fitted for tropical agriculture' (Birtles, 1995). The area was subsequently colonised and large tracts of land were logged or cleared for maize, sugar, dairy, tea and cotton.

Following the separation of Queensland from New South Wales, land development in Queensland followed a policy of closer settlement (Cameron, 2005) to fill the lands of the newly founded state. Timber getters moved to the Atherton Tableland, aided by the building of roads and railways, which stimulated further settlement and land clearing.

During the 1950s, large-scale schemes to develop most of the north Queensland 'scrub lands' into small farms were proposed (Frawley, 1987; Gould 2000). The Queensland Forestry Department argued against such schemes, lobbying for the reservation of forested lands and their professional management for timber production and 'feature protection'. They were successful and most of the remaining forested lands were retained as Crown land.

A change in perception

Up to the late 1950s, while general botanical observations and limited collections had been made, the study of rainforest vegetation was largely neglected except for forestry and timber extraction purposes. Such forest was often seen as a barrier to progress, and in a number of states throughout Australia landholders could not receive government incentive funding until their land had been cleared of trees (Cassells *et al* 1988).

The 1960s saw significant change in rainforest management, planning and utilisation for two reasons: the expansion in effort and expenditure by the government into long-term management planning; and the evolution of the conservation movement, which successfully challenged the pre-1960 management of timber in favour of managing

for rainforest preservation and conservation (Valentine and Hill, 2008). This radical change in the way society valued the region's rainforests was largely due to the changes in knowledge and appreciation of the international scientific significance of the rainforests.

The foundations for the study of the Wet Tropics rainforests were laid by Len Webb (1959, 1968), who published the first systematic classification of Australian rainforest vegetation from Tasmania to the monsoonal tropics. Until the 1970s, it was thought that rainforests were alien to the Australian landscape—eucalypts and acacias were considered the quintessential Australian vegetation. Rainforests were thought to be recent invaders from Asia via the land bridge that, in fairly recent geological times, connected Australia with New Guinea. Ecological and taxonomic research, however, gradually provided evidence that radically changed this view (Webb 1959; Webb *et al.* 1976, 1984; Webb and Tracey 1981).



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Peter Valentine

Former chair of the
Wet Tropics board

Scientists started to write articles about the rainforest—these were helping people to have a better understanding. When people walked in the rainforest, they did not see evidence of all the rich wildlife; they could not interpret it without tools and guidance.

There was a recognisable need to help people understand the true magnificence of the rainforest. It did not come naturally. They could look at the rainforest and say scrub! Barrier! Wait-a-while, lawyer vine, stinging plants: all the things they did not want to know about.

*There was a recognisable
need to help people
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rainforest.*



The rise of rainforest conservation

The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Queensland Conservation Council launched the Rescue the Rainforest Campaign in 1981, followed by a blockade of logging operations on Mount Windsor Tableland later that year. Pressure was being mounted by conservation groups to protect the rainforests from logging operations, though the primary focus of early campaigns was on the Daintree area.

A significant event in the campaign for rainforest protection came in November 1983 when a developer, supported by the then Queensland Government, constructed the Cape Tribulation–Bloomfield Road (Wilkie, 2015). This resulted in a blockade by protestors which, although unsuccessful in stopping the construction of the road, focussed significant national and international attention to the area.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Ro Hill
Former Wet Tropics Management Authority board director and committee member

The Wet Tropics is an important part of the global history of people's growing concern about the destruction of rainforests. I remember being contacted by a National Geographic photographer in 1982 who was doing a story on the world's rainforests and we were the first people that he came across who were protesting against rainforest destruction. He came to Australia especially because of this.

Everyone now takes rainforest conservation for granted because of its obvious benefits. However, it wasn't back then and the movement that started in the Wet Tropics was world leading.

The movement that started in the Wet Tropics was world leading.



A bumpy road to listing

The Wet Tropics featured heavily in national environmental politics throughout the 1980s. The World Heritage listing of the Area was beset with political battles between the Queensland and Australian governments (Burg, 2007)—the former strongly opposed the idea, while the latter championed it.

The impetus for the Wet Tropics' eventual World Heritage listing was its inclusion on the World Conservation Union's list of places deserving World Heritage protection in 1982.

In 1984, the Australian Heritage Commission engaged the Rainforest Conservation Society of Queensland to evaluate the international conservation significance of the Wet Tropics. Their report stated: 'we conclude that the Wet Tropics region of north-east Queensland is one of the most significant regional ecosystems in the world. It is of outstanding scientific importance and natural beauty and adequately fulfils all four of the criteria defined by the World Heritage Convention for inclusion in the World Heritage List.' In September 1984, the Australian Heritage Commission officially recommended the Australian Government proceed to World Heritage nomination.

During 1985, the Australian Government developed the National Rainforest Conservation Program, which included \$22.24 million for a review of the rainforest timber industry, acquisition of rainforest on private lands, preservation of virgin rainforest and the establishment of a national rainforest research institute. The Queensland Government rejected the program and refused to participate.

The 1987 federal election saw the Australian Government announce its commitment to the World Heritage listing of the rainforests of the Wet Tropics of Queensland, despite the objections of the Queensland Government, all of the region's shire councils and several Aboriginal representative groups.

The Australian Government formally presented the nomination of the Wet Tropics to the World Heritage Committee on 23 December 1987. The State Government immediately mounted a High Court challenge and established an anti-listing alliance.

In response to the concerns of local residents and communities about the social and economic consequences of listing, the Queensland Premier urged groups to 'set yourselves up like an army and fight' (Woodward 1987).

Horsfall and Fuary (1988) reported that Aboriginal groups were divided between those who supported the listing because cultural maintenance was strongly linked to rainforest protection, and those who opposed it as a limitation on their rights. Aboriginal leaders were among groups funded by the State Government to lobby the World Heritage Bureau against the listing.

In 1988, so as not to compromise the listing, the Australian Government passed a regulation under the *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983* banning logging in the Wet Tropics. In April of that

year they announced a \$75.3 million Wet Tropics of Queensland Structural Adjustment Package (SAP) for job creation, labour adjustment and assistance and business compensation to offset the impacts of the cessation of logging.

At the *Twelfth Session of the World Heritage Committee* in Brasilia, Queensland's Wet Tropics nomination was endorsed and the Area was officially inscribed on the World Heritage list on 9 December 1988, but it would take a change of government in Queensland before there would be any support from the State.

Outstanding universal value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

The concept of outstanding universal value underpins the whole World Heritage Convention and all activities associated with properties inscribed on the List.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area fulfils all four natural criteria for World Heritage listing, and the necessary conditions of integrity. The Wet Tropics is considered to:

- contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance—*criterion (vii)*
- be an outstanding example representing the major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, and significant on-going

geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features—*criterion (viii)*

- be an outstanding example representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals—*criterion (ix)*
- contain the most important significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation—*criterion (x)*.

Responsibilities, governance and legislation

Under the World Heritage Convention, the Australian Government is required to provide:

- protection (legislative action)
- conservation (management action)
- presentation (sharing the outstanding universal value of the place with the community)
- transmission to future generations (ensuring the values of the area are protected so that they can be passed onto future generations)
- rehabilitation (repairing any damage to the integrity of the World Heritage Area).

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area remains unique for Australia, in that it is protected under a legislative regime established specifically to support its World Heritage status. Three documents govern the protection of the Area: the *Management Scheme Intergovernmental Agreement* (the Agreement) between the Australian and the Queensland government; the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Act); and the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* (the Plan).

In November 1990, the Queensland and Australian governments established a Ministerial Council of relevant ministers, which was the executive policy and decision-making body. They formalised an

agreement for the funding and management of the Area by signing the Agreement—an important milestone, as it was the precursor to both the Act and the Plan. Indeed, from the time of its signing up until the Act was gazetted in November 1993, the Agreement provided the official power for managing the Area.

The Agreement originally set up two separate bodies which later merged to become the present Authority. The original Authority, which became the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board under the Act, consisted of five private citizens who reported directly to the Ministerial Council with the intent of guaranteeing independence in decision making. The second body set up under the Agreement was the Wet Tropics Management Agency.

Under the Act, the Queensland Parliament 'recognises that Australia's obligation under the World Heritage

Convention is to ensure the protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation, and transmission to future generations of the natural heritage values of the Area'. It is 'the intention of the Parliament that the Area should be established and maintained as a World Heritage Area of the highest standard'.

The Plan is a regulation under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*; it regulates activities inside the Area that have the potential to adversely affect its integrity. It is currently under review to address issues such as zoning, visitor sites and facilities, roads and access, recognition of Rainforest Aboriginal tradition and activities allowed under a permit.

In the 30 years since the World Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics, the Authority has met Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention and will continue to do so into the future, enabled by strong governance and legislative frameworks.

“

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Ro Hill

Former Wet Tropics Management Authority board director and committee member

Overall we've achieved a lot since establishing the Wet Tropics [World Heritage Area] in 1988. I think institutionalising protection of the rainforest into the mainstream of north Queensland society has been a key achievement. I remember when a National Party Minister spoke about the Tully Millstream Falls and building a dam inside

the World Heritage Area in the 1990s. The Minister appeared on the front page of the newspaper stating "these are good ideas but the community won't wear them anymore". It's like the community developed informal institutions to protect the rainforest. This is part of the process of social normalisation that occurred over this time and it has helped ensure that the rainforest could survive in the long term.

I think in terms of environmental challenges it's less positive. We haven't dealt with climate change adequately. The threats are still very large, because of all

the endemic mountain species here. I also worry about the level of recognition of just how special the Wet Tropics is. The IUCN recognises that the Wet Tropics as the second most irreplaceable World Heritage Area on Earth. I don't think that it figures in the reckoning of governments and people. Australians generally take seriously the importance of the reef but the rainforest doesn't seem to register, despite its exceptional values being recognised by the IUCN.

*In terms of environmental challenges it's less positive.
We haven't dealt with climate change adequately.*

”

The value of the Wet Tropics to the regional community



Rainforest canopy, Daintree National Park (TTNQ Images)

Article 5(a) of the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* requires management to 'adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community'.

A wide range of scientists, artists, conservation groups, and non-government organisations in the region provided the inspiration and drive for the World Heritage listing (Gunn and Brouwer, 2016). From its earliest days, the Authority realised that resolving ecological problems required authentic and meaningful engagement with communities, management agencies, industries and policymakers.

Cultural and social effects of listing on the regional community

The World Heritage listing of the Area occurred at a time of immense social change in the region, namely the collapse of the timber industry. It was expected that such a dramatic contraction of a core regional industry would result in marked negative economic and social impacts in those communities most heavily dependent upon it. All logging within the Area ceased in 1988 and by 1991 there were only two licensed timber mills still operating in the Atherton and Ingham forestry districts. Prior to listing there had been 12 mills in operation employing 486 timber workers. By 1991, 413 of these timber mill workers had been made redundant (Lynch 2000).

Timber extraction in the Wet Tropic rainforests

For around 50 years until 1980, the Wet Tropics had been logged at a rate of around 200,000m³ of timber per annum.

By 1980 it was already clear to forestry professionals that the allowable cut was far in excess of sustainable yields (Stocker *et al.* 1977). In 1981 the Crown quota of timber from northern Queensland rainforests was reduced to 152,000m³ but this figure could not be achieved by the logging companies (Department of Forestry Queensland, 1981). In 1983 Crown quotas were set at 130,000m³ but only 112,000m³ could be found.

Although the Crown quota remained static, in 1985 the industry harvested only 88,000m³. By 1987 the quota was reduced to 60,000m³ and still could not be met when the Commonwealth Government introduced a unilateral decision to ban logging. In the decade leading up to World Heritage listing, the industry based on Crown timber had collapsed from 200,000m³ per year to less than 60,000m³. Associated with this demise was the loss of perhaps two-thirds of the workforce (from about 2,000 in 1981 to around 760 in 1987) and a reduction in logging contractors associated with the reduced yield.

The Commonwealth oversaw two social impact assessments (SIA): the first was conducted in 1987 prior to listing, with the other conducted four years later (Vancley 1993). The initial SIA was used as the basis of a Structural Adjustment Package (SAP) designed to ensure retrenched timber workers would not be unfairly disadvantaged. A sum of \$75.3 million was allocated for the SAP, comprising \$50.9 million for employment-related programs and \$24.4 million for business compensation. The job creation component comprised public works projects, tree planting projects, private sector initiatives and local community initiatives. Assistance for displaced workers included a number of allowances, training subsidies and an early retirement package.

While World Heritage listing certainly caused social impacts at the individual level, it was anticipated that at the community level any adverse impacts would eventually be overshadowed by changes in other areas of the regional economic base.

Logging versus tourism

The major argument put forward opposing the nomination and listing of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was that it would socially and economically cripple the region by destroying the rainforest logging industry. It was claimed that there would be major losses of employment and income. These arguments were fiercely debated despite the facts that sustainable timber yields were in rapid decline, costs of maintaining the industry was exceeding royalties, and research showed significant environmental impacts from logging (Cassells *et al.* 1988).

There is no doubt that the timber industry had been a major contributor to north Queensland's regional economy since European settlement, and the effects of this industry permeated many aspects of regional activity. Consequently, the end of the timber industry caused a major disruption to the economies of several communities reliant on this industry for their livelihoods. At the time of listing, the gross value of the region in timber sales was around \$26 million. Driml (1997) converted this value to a 1994 equivalent of \$34 million in order to make post-listing comparisons between tourism and logging to the regional economy. This figure of \$34 million was directly comparable with the gross expenditure on tourism in 1994 of \$443 million. These figures indicate that the gross expenditure on tourism seven years after the prohibition of logging was around ten times the gross value of logging and timber production in the year logging ceased in the Area.

As predicted by many of the supporters for World Heritage listing, the growth in tourism has more than offset negative economic impacts resulting from the cessation of logging (Driml 2000). It must be acknowledged, however, that tourism was not an alternative for many individuals and some communities previously dependent on the timber industry.

The value of tourism in the Wet Tropics

Almost two decades later, a nationwide analysis of the economic contribution of Australia's World Heritage properties found that in terms of national economic impact, the Wet Tropics was one of the most significant World Heritage areas in Australia.

It was estimated to contribute more than \$2.6 billion in annual direct output and household income, as well as almost 13,600 direct and indirect jobs; demonstrating a very real and significant value of the Area to the regional, state and national economy (Gillespie Economics 2008). During the year ending 2010, the region had an estimated 5.7 million visitors and was the third most significant destination in Australia for international visitors.

“

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Ro Hill

Former Wet Tropics
Management Authority board
director and committee member

When I first came to Cairns I used to imagine what it was like to see the reef and rainforest being promoted and accessible to visitors. But in those days there were no signs or businesses based on rainforest tourism.

But now people move through Cairns airport and the images are everywhere and we have World Heritage signs on the roads. We know that people are coming from all over the world to see and enjoy these sites. This has exceeded my expectation.

**We know
that people
are coming
from all over
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see and enjoy
these sites.**

”

Community attitudes

As previously recognised, conflict and disputation over the values and uses of the Wet Tropics rainforests characterised the nomination and listing of the World Heritage Area. In addition to the ban on logging, the progressive conversion of Wet Tropics lands to national parks also resulted in more restrictions on what the Area would be used for, and the gazettal of the Wet Tropics Management Plan added a further layer of prohibition and regulation. These actions polarised the community.

Recognising the need for broad community engagement, the Authority commissioned a number of community attitude surveys (AGB McNair 1992, 1993 and 1996). These surveys (Table 1) were designed to develop an understanding of how the local community uses the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and engages with the Authority, and to assess community attitudes towards the management of

the Wet Tropics (AC Nielsen, 1999). More detailed studies have attempted to capture a broad range of community views (Bentrupperbäumer and Reser 2003, 2006), including use, access and support for Rainforest Aboriginal cultural heritage in a future World Heritage listing.

What is apparent from the surveys is that, despite the challenging start, it is well-recognised that many other values have come to the community from World Heritage protection and management. In the 30 years since listing, community support for the Area has grown from 50% in 1996 to over 80% in 2007, and this improving trend is likely to have continued in the eleven years since the last survey was undertaken. Being a resident of the Wet Tropics region brings pride to communities and individuals and promotes an overarching sense of place, social identity and cohesion (Carmody and Prideaux, 2007).

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CHANGES IN ATTITUDES FROM COMMUNITY SURVEYS (1992 TO 2007)

Survey	Method	Key findings
<i>Community Attitudes to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area: A Benchmark Study (1992)</i>	2,000 telephone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 52% were aware that the Wet Tropics was a World Heritage listed area• 51% strongly support World Heritage listing• 26% visit the Area once a month or more• 46% visit for picnicking, swimming and bushwalking/ hiking
<i>Community Attitudes to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (1993)</i>	2,000 telephone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 59% strongly support World Heritage listing• 54% visit for picnicking, taking scenic drives, swimming and bushwalking/ hiking.
<i>Community Attitudes to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (1996)</i>	1,900 telephone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 68% were aware that the Wet Tropics was a World Heritage listed area• 56% strongly support World Heritage listing• 60% visit for taking scenic drives and picnicking.
<i>The Role of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in the Life of the Community: A Survey of the North Queensland Community (2002)</i>	788 surveys returned from postal distribution and drop-off/pick-up survey methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 93% were aware that the Wet Tropics was a World Heritage listed area• 58% strongly support the World Heritage listing• 25% visit the Area once a month or more often• 56% visit for a recreational activity.
<i>Community Attitudes, Knowledge, Perceptions and Use of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (2007)</i>	853 surveys returned from postal distribution and drop-off/pick-up survey methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 92.6% of respondents supported the general level of protection that operates in the World Heritage Area• 71.8% support for the inclusion of Indigenous cultural heritage in a future World Heritage listing• 89% of respondents have visited the Area at least once• Recreational activity was the main reason for visiting the Area.

The community has a sense of attachment to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and it plays an important role in their quality of life: providing scenic amenity and substantial areas of environmental significance for recreational activities, employment, personal wellbeing and educational purposes (Scherl, 2013). Residents view the Area as an integral part of their landscape, lifestyle and community, and feel a strong sense of collective ownership and responsibility. The Area is also valued by the broader regional North Queensland community and its outstanding universal value is widely recognised and supported in the Australian community and elsewhere.

“ IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Peter Hitchcock
Wet Tropics Management Authority executive director (1991-1997)

What I am quite proud of was the community attitude surveys. What comes out of the interviews was extremely valuable. We were able to assess what the overall level of support was for the World Heritage Area. We expected low levels of support from rural areas. Surveys showed that even in the most rural areas, there was still a majority of people who supported the World Heritage Area. That surprised everyone. It was thought in government circles that that there was no support in rural areas, however the surveys showed this to be wrong. If you do nothing to find out what is in people's minds then you will get nothing.

Even in the most rural areas, there was still a majority of people who supported the World Heritage Area”

Community wellbeing

Management approaches adopted for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area continue to be successful in recruiting people from different sectors of the community, through formal and informal processes. The Authority engages the community in management of the World Heritage Area in a variety of ways including partnerships, capacity building, visitor information and community education. Formal community involvement in the management of the Area is based on both statutory consultative and advisory groups and, when required, a range of sector or issue-focussed liaison groups which provide feedback, advice and recommendations to the Authority.

“ IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Peter Valentine
Former chair of the Wet Tropics board

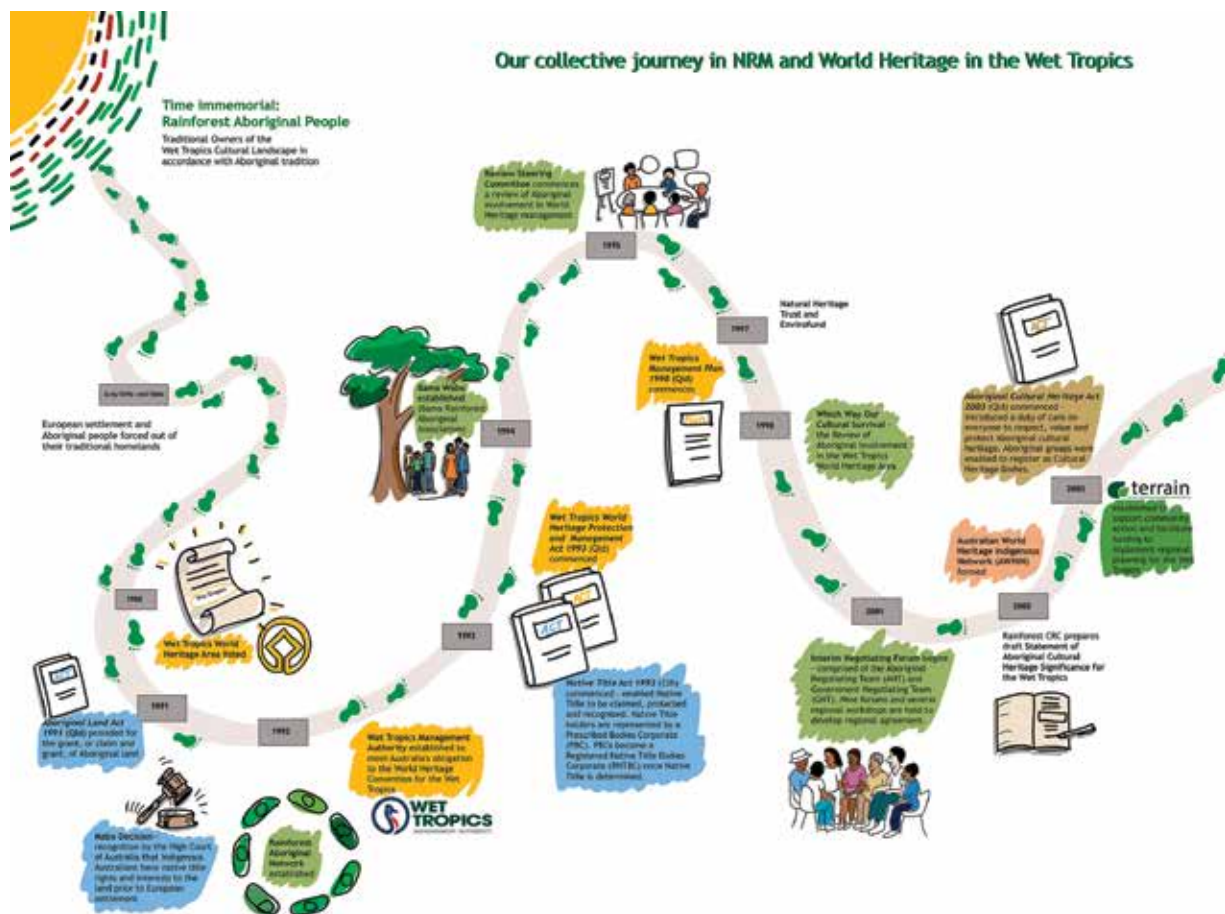
The move to establish strong community engagement through committees was the foundation for the success of the Authority. In addition to the Community Consultative Committee (CCC), the tourism, conservation and Aboriginal liaison groups were added over time. They gave us the opportunity to develop deeper and richer relationships, and get a much stronger level of understanding of the different groups and interests.

There were always people on the CCC that came from parts of the community that opposed the idea of World Heritage listing to some extent but wanted to be part of it once it was established. They ultimately became good supporters of World Heritage. The Authority continued to work hard to engage more people.

The CCC was good because it brought people together to talk to each other. It was a forum for the community as much as the Wet Tropics Management Authority. All the ideas had to come out and all the concerns had to come out. However, I think having those extra liaison groups allowed for more of the 'nitty-gritty' to be taken up. All the time on the CCC, we discussed everything under the sun without any sense of bitterness or anger. There were different viewpoints but people were reasonably mature and they were all local people. The community was big enough, intelligent enough and passionate enough to do all these things and make it work.

The move to establish strong community engagement through committees was the foundation for the success of the Authority”

Involving Rainforest Aboriginal people in World Heritage management



Historical context: dispossession of country

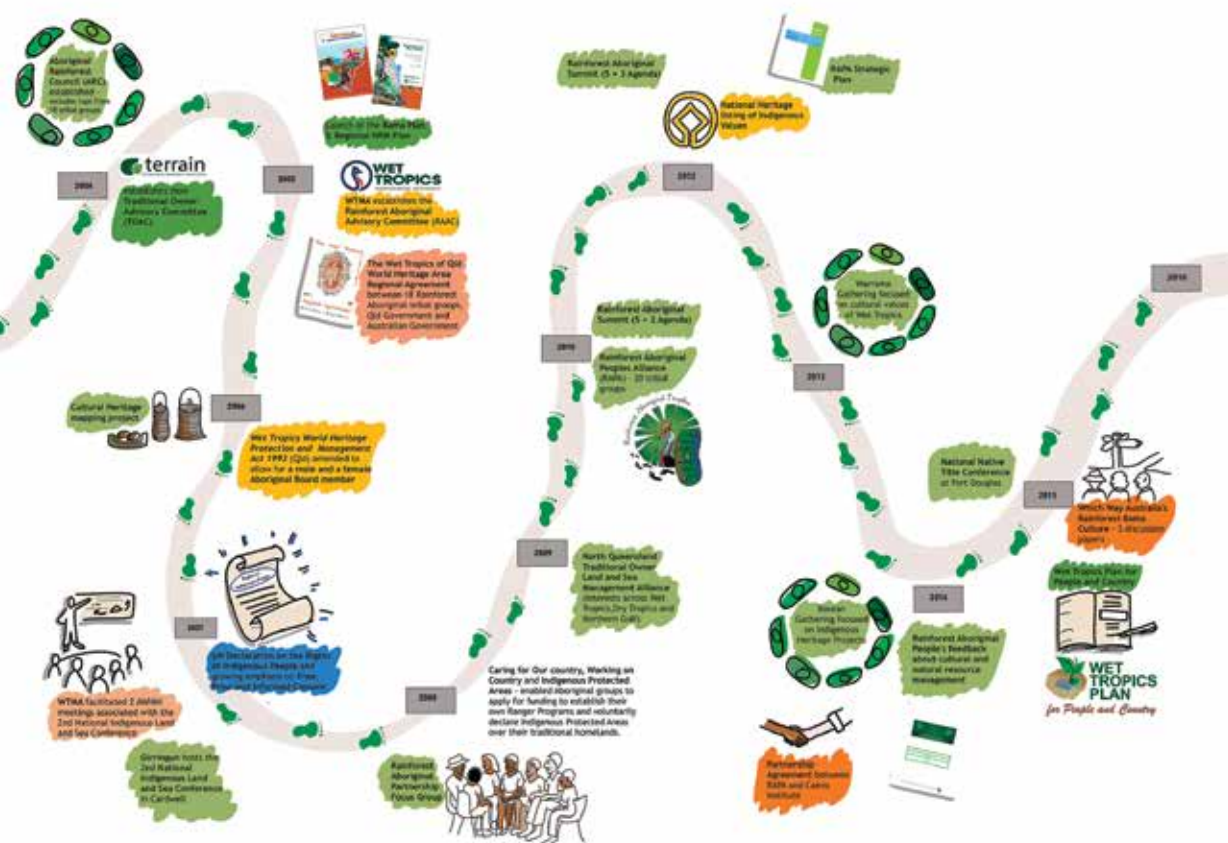
Rainforest Aboriginal people have adapted to a range of climatic, environmental, political and social changes – including a long, dark history of dispossession from the Wet Tropics region. While time has passed since then, Rainforest Aboriginal people continue to live through these past injustices and face consequent disadvantage and inequality in their lives. No other landowner surrendered so much land to World Heritage listing as did the Rainforest Aboriginal peoples (Bama Wabu, 1996).

Today, there are at least 20 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups, 120 clans and 8 language groups—currently over 20,000 people—with ongoing traditional connections to landscapes in the Wet Tropics World

Heritage Area. Each group has customary obligations for management of their country under Aboriginal lore. Caring for country, sharing of stories, the use of language, and the performance of songs and dances are still very important. These activities play an important part in maintaining Rainforest Aboriginal people's unique evolving cultural identity and connection to country.

A Rainforest Aboriginal perspective

While there was general support from most Rainforest Aboriginal people to protect the values of the Wet Tropics, some Rainforest Aboriginal people objected to the World Heritage listing over their lands, in particular at Yarrabah and other former missions.



Graphic drawings by Michelle Walker, with information and contributions from Rainforest Aboriginal People, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Tropical Wet

Two Rainforest Aboriginal representatives from Yarrabah travelled to Paris in June 1988 to voice their objections to the World Heritage Bureau about their land being included on the World Heritage List without their consent. Representatives also met with Commonwealth Ministers to try and re-negotiate World Heritage boundaries.

The World Heritage Bureau recommended the nominated wet tropical rainforests of north-east Australia be inscribed as a World Heritage Area. It requested the Commonwealth to provide clarification and further information on several points, particularly in relation to future management arrangements involving the State and Commonwealth governments, and a revision of the proposed boundaries to exclude areas which did not contribute significant values.

The Bureau, in considering the World Heritage nomination, also reacted to opposition of some Aboriginal groups to World Heritage listing by expressing their requirement for the Commonwealth to fully consider ways to accommodate Aboriginal concerns and interests once listed.

The Commonwealth Government developed a special review team which prepared a report addressing the recommendations of the Bureau to the World Heritage Committee Secretariat in September 1988. The report primarily addressed boundary concerns, but also clarified a number of other issues requested by the Bureau. In dealing with questions about Aboriginal opposition to inclusion of their land, the report stated "that for Aboriginal communities which have Deed of Grant



Preparing for traditional dancing (Wet Tropics Images / Brad Newton Images)

in Trust (DOGIT) land within the nominated area, the Government has no intention of restricting traditional non-commercial activities. The proposed management arrangements are designed to ensure that Aboriginal communities play an important role in the future management of the nominated area" (IUCN, 1988). The Commonwealth re-submitted the World Heritage nomination to the World Heritage Committee in October 1988.

In November 1988, the Chairperson of the Yarrabah Aboriginal Community Council wrote to the Environment Minister in response to the Commonwealth's position on the inclusion of Aboriginal land in the nomination. "This potential interference with our rights to self-management and self-determination could not receive our agreement if there were no tangible benefits to be received by the community. If there be no tangible benefits and such interference with our land rights, we would have no option but to continue strenuous opposition to our lands being included in the listing..." (Brennan, 1992).

The letter continued, "Basically you have offered us nothing but the assurance we will still be able to use our land as we do presently, if all goes well. The cost to us will be the uncertainty and time involved in

gaining approval from outside bodies for our land use including outstation development... We thought you would do more to consult with us. We thought you would have more regard to our land rights and self-management... If listed, it will be without our consent" (Brennan, 1992).

Despite this, the Wet Tropics of Queensland was inscribed on the World Heritage List on the 9 December 1988. To enshrine commitments to the World Heritage Committee, the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* was prepared and legislated with:

- an acknowledgement of the significant contribution that Aboriginal people can make to the management of cultural and natural heritage within the World Heritage Area, particularly through joint management agreements
- a requirement for the Authority to have regard to the Aboriginal tradition and to liaise and cooperate with Aboriginal people particularly concerned with the land in the Wet Tropics
- a requirement for Ministerial Council to appoint one Aboriginal person particularly concerned with the land in the Wet Tropics to the Authority's board of directors.

Evolution of relationships and attitudes

When the Authority was established in 1992, it became a priority to improve Aboriginal engagement. There was not a well-developed or common understanding about joint management and or Aboriginal cultural values and what this might mean for World Heritage management. It was also before the Mabo decision and Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 so Rainforest Aboriginal people's rights and interests were less in policymakers and politicians' minds.

A turning point occurred when the Authority acted on Rainforest Aboriginal people's concerns about the removal of stones from a sacred site in the Daintree. The Authority supported negotiations with the tourism industry and Douglas Shire Council to relocate the road, avoiding contact and disruption to this sacred site. By taking this issue up, the Authority signalled a more responsive and supportive approach to dealing with Rainforest Aboriginal people's concerns.

Native title and recognition of rights

Following the Mabo decision in 1991, Rainforest Aboriginal people's native title rights and interests were formally recognised through the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993*. This provided a national scheme for the recognition and protection of native title and for its coexistence with the existing land management system. Following a consent determination of native title, Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) were negotiated between native title groups and others to suit particular circumstances. Although the ILUAs protected the interests of government agencies, they did not go far enough to capture basic engagement protocols or the rights and interests of Rainforest Aboriginal people in decision making for national parks and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Rainforest Aboriginal people successfully lobbied the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council to financially support Rainforest Aboriginal people to review the legislative, policy and protocol constraints to proper involvement in World Heritage Area management. The Ministerial Council also supported a negotiation process to improve Rainforest Aboriginal people's involvement in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. The growing emphasis on the principle of 'free, prior and informed consent' (FAO,

2016) of Indigenous people in the management of World Heritage Areas has given added impetus for more appropriate engagement by Indigenous Australians in such matters.

Bridging the gap or forging it wider

Participation in World Heritage Area management has the potential to contribute significantly to Closing the Gap targets (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018). Links between environmental, cultural and socio-economic policies and programs must be strong to realise appropriate investment needs for Traditional Owner organisations involved with looking after country.

Millions of dollars are spent on negotiating native title determinations and making framework agreements. However, when it comes to the implementation of programs and projects that provide for equitable involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal people in decision making and on-ground management, there are very few resources or meaningful support to build Rainforest Aboriginal people's capabilities and capacities.

A cooperative named Bama Wabu was established in 1994 and led the development of a Rainforest Aboriginal people's submission called *Reasonable Expectations or Grand Delusions* (1996) which sought to persuade the Authority to consider Aboriginal issues in the development of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998. The submission provided background information about Rainforest Aboriginal history (since 1874) and provided recommendations to improve the draft plan and engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal people in the management of the World Heritage Area. Rainforest Aboriginal people held numerous workshops and came to a tacit agreement that the Plan failed to meet international, common law and statutory obligations to Aboriginal tradition and Aboriginal peoples. There was also frustration that the Plan exclusively focussed on natural values and did not include reference to Aboriginal culture and connection to country. Aboriginal leaders protested in front of the Authority's office and burnt a copy of the Plan to show that it was inadequate and unworkable in its current form.

When the first ten-year review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan commenced in 1998, Bama Wabu led another engagement process with Rainforest Aboriginal people to develop "*Which Way Our Cultural Survival*". This report outlined 163 specific recommendations for how Aboriginal people should be involved in the management



Passing traditional knowledge, Yarrabah boardwalk (Wet Tropics Images / Brad Newton)

of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. As a result the Commonwealth Government responded by resourcing the establishment of the Interim Negotiating Forum (INF) to address these recommendations and resolve how to better involve Rainforest Aboriginal people in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The negotiations were between the government negotiating team, including representatives from the Authority and Queensland and Australian governments, and the Aboriginal Negotiating Team comprising mandated Rainforest Aboriginal representatives from across the region. The INF pulled out a series of recommendations from *“Which Way Our Cultural Survival”*, which became the focus of negotiations and formed the basis for a formal agreement. After three years of negotiations including several large Rainforest Aboriginal regional workshops, the process resulted in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement (the Regional Agreement).

The Regional Agreement

On the 29 April 2005, the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement was signed to provide a framework for the cooperative management of the World Heritage Area by Rainforest Aboriginal people, the Australian and Queensland governments.

An Aboriginal Natural and Cultural Resource Management Plan (commonly known as the ‘Bama Plan’) was also launched at this time to promote natural and cultural resource management considerations and define the aspirations that Rainforest Aboriginal people have for country and culture, through 36 strategy areas and 108 specific actions. The Bama Plan was prepared and implemented with the support of Terrain NRM and a Traditional Owner Advisory Committee.

Allison Halliday

I first became involved with the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in 1994, and that is when the late Vince Mundraby was heading up Bamu Wabu. Vince had a strong history of pushing for investment to flow from the 1992 High Court decision on Mabo and native title. Vince was always about the need to be tenure blind when managing country, regardless of what kind of tenure was overlaying country.

The underlying thing is that it is our country at the end of the day. The Rainforest Aboriginal Network initiated the review 'Which Way Our Cultural Survival' and Bama Wabu carried this work through to completion. There were 163 recommendations from this report targeting actions and responses from various tiers of government. This led to the funding to develop the Regional Agreement through the establishment of the Interim Negotiating Forum (INF). We went up to Wujal, Daintree, all the way inland west to Ravenshoe and Mount Garnet, the Tablelands, south to Paluma and on as far as Palm Island, doing a whole lot of consultation. This gave the opportunity for government people to talk to and understand local Aboriginal people and the way they see the world.

The signing of the Regional Agreement occurred on 29 April 2005, at Warrina Lakes in Innisfail. We had our Elders from each of the respective tribal groups sign off on the Regional Agreement in conjunction with the government Ministers – the Hon Greg Hunt MP from the Commonwealth and the Hon Desley Boyle MP from the state. It was an emotional day for many after a lot of hard work, talking and negotiating. Quite a few of our Elders who signed the Regional Agreement have sadly passed on since then.

I would characterise the mood of the time as one of hopefulness and with energy levels that were great. It was unbelievable. I think at every meeting we had, we had everyone attend. People believed and there was a lot of buy-in. I felt really hopeful and confident. The Wet Tropics executive director at the time of the signing of the Regional Agreement was supportive and active within the negotiating team. Some of the outcomes that the Authority achieved and that were important included the establishment of a formal Rainforest

The underlying thing is that it is our country at the end of the day.

We were still trying to do work, with no resources, very little support and we are still losing momentum.

Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAAC) under section 40 of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993, and the ongoing appointment of two Aboriginal board directors. Whoever sat on the Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC) as a director also sat on the RAAC and this ensured it had representation across the 18 groups that signed up to the Regional Agreement. The establishment of RAAC, and two Aboriginal board members, was seen by us as the Authority genuinely seeking to empower Rainforest Aboriginal people.

The ARC was given funding of \$150,000 in the first year from the state and from the Commonwealth government's respectively.

Therefore, we had \$300,000 budget. The RAAC and ARC were a mirror image of each other (same individuals) but had different roles. After the ARC and RAAC were established, I went on to be acting director on the Authority's board and was later confirmed as an appointed director, with support and mandate from the RAAC and ARC. Russell Butler Senior became the male director at that time.

I started to become frustrated when there were changes in the state of play within government and change in managers who had been supporting the Regional Agreement. The ARC did not get all the funding agreed to, and that severely impeded our ability to achieve outcomes. The ARC was sadly dissolved in 2008, which meant that the protocols, processes and objectives in the Regional Agreement could not be implemented. It appeared as though some partner agencies pulled the rug from under our feet. They just didn't seem committed to supporting the Regional Agreement even though there were individuals in the agencies who were committed and working hard. We set up many of these things but once the ARC closed its doors, we felt like everything came to a screeching halt and nothing was followed through thereafter.

It left a bad taste and a sense of dissatisfaction and we responded by establishing the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance (RAPA) in 2010, as a less formal alliance to maintain momentum, rather than as a corporation. This was a hard period and it was difficult to get people to buy in when they had lost faith with the agencies and with the process. We were still trying to do work, with no resources, very little support and we are still losing momentum.

An independent voice for Rainforest Aboriginal people

2002–2008 was an extremely active and optimistic period with the focus on the Regional Agreement and a period of hope, optimism and innovation. Energy and enthusiasm was also bolstered by Commonwealth funding for Indigenous Protected Areas, Indigenous rangers, the establishment of prescribed bodies corporate and successful native title claims.

The early years of the Regional Agreement, with the Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC) providing leadership and governance, inspired a concept to share and support Traditional Owners of other Australian World Heritage Areas through a national network. The Australian Department of Environment and the Authority supported the establishment of the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network (AWHIN) and the inaugural meeting occurred in 2002.

AWHIN connected and empowered grassroots Traditional Owners by giving them a voice at the highest levels of World Heritage governance in Australia. Allison Halliday and Ernie Raymont were the two Rainforest Aboriginal people represented on AWHIN. They could also be represented by proxies if needed. It provided equity with others who participated in decision making. The Rainforest Aboriginal representative and one other from AWHIN joined the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC). This created greater opportunities to formulate options and reconcile nationwide issues. However, inadequate financial and political support has more recently led to a growing sense of powerlessness and scepticism about the future and the AWHIN has not met for several years or participated on the AWHAC. The other World Heritage areas represented on the committee followed the Wet Tropics' lead and took on the approach to on-ground Aboriginal management being implemented locally. Wet Tropics representatives on AWHIN were seen as leading the way and Allison Halliday was invited to speak at a UNESCO conference in Banff Canada on Mountains at Risk, addressing issues of on-ground management and self-determination for Aboriginal people.

The ARC also closed its doors in 2008, meaning the protocols, principles and objectives in the Regional Agreement could not be effectively implemented. A lot of momentum, trust and hope in the working relationship between the Authority and Rainforest Aboriginal people was lost at this time—a period of frustration for many. At the closure of ARC, there

was pressure for the Board's Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAAC) to now be the voice for all Rainforest Aboriginal people's concerns, although they were not established to undertake this task. Frustration and a desire to be driving their own agendas led to the call by Rainforest Aboriginal members to disband the RAAC and Terrain NRM's Traditional Owner Advisory Committee. Both were dissolved at a joint meeting in 2011.

After many years of activism, advocacy and negotiation, the Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups of the Wet Tropics were still waiting for equitable involvement in World Heritage Area management. Fewer of the younger generations appear to see real value in these processes, having seen their parents and grandparents try for many years with little or no return.

The reaffirmation that significant investment is required to support Rainforest Aboriginal people's capacity to engage equitably and to actively participate in the policy, planning and program development for managing Australia's World Heritage Areas was now exceedingly clear. In particular to support the capacity for leadership, institutional governance and operation, employment and business development, and joint management arrangements for protected areas.

A shift towards self determination

One of the most important developments over the history of the Area since listing has been the number of successful native title claims; at least 87.5% of the World Heritage Area has been native title determined or is currently under application. Rainforest Aboriginal organisations are strengthening their capacity to develop land management and economic development agendas. A number of Rainforest Aboriginal organisations have registered themselves as cultural heritage bodies.

The establishment of the Rainforest Aboriginal People's Alliance (RAPA) marked a turning point and the need to re-negotiate relationships. RAPA's focus was to provide Rainforest Aboriginal people with a more self-determining network for engaging on a broad range of interests within the region.

RAPA convened a Rainforest Aboriginal summit in 2011 to develop its strategic plan and agenda; the Warrama Summit in 2013 to discuss the key cultural values of the region; and the Booran gathering in 2014 to develop a partnership agreement with the Cairns Institute and CSIRO to deliver Indigenous

heritage projects. The partnership resulted in three discussion papers focusing on Indigenous-led management, re-listing the cultural values for World Heritage, economic development and sustainable livelihoods (Dale *et al* 2016; Hill *et al* 2016 and Turnour, 2016).

The focus was now about securing the place of Rainforest Aboriginal organisations and participating in the economy. In addition, many organisations struggling with short-term grant funding were starting to think in new ways, for example, charging fees for services and future act notices, and registering as public benevolent institutions and cultural heritage bodies. With more capacity, groups were now better placed to apply for grants and manage programs.

The Authority has further reaffirmed its rapport with Rainforest Aboriginal people and their organisations over recent years. There are some perceptions that the Authority deliberately moved its focus away from Rainforest Aboriginal issues particularly when the ARC closed its doors and the RAAC was dissolved. However, the Authority received less support to play a regional coordination role and local Rainforest Aboriginal organisations sought to lead their own conversations and agendas. This led to a period of review and reflection as the Authority sought to establish new relevance in this area.

Since the disbanding of the RAAC, the Authority's focus has been to engage with Rainforest Aboriginal people at the local level and through sub-regional organisations. A range of project-based outcomes has been achieved with this approach. Rainforest Aboriginal people are also included in the membership of the Authority's two statutory advisory committees (i.e. Community Consultative Committee

and Scientific Advisory Committee) and two non-statutory committees (i.e. Cassowary Recovery Team and the Yellow Crazy Ant Project Reference Group), and as directors on the Authority Board.

National Heritage listing and prospects for World Heritage listing of cultural values

On 9 November 2012 the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area's Indigenous heritage values were included as part of the existing Wet Tropics of Queensland National Heritage listing. The listing recognises that Rainforest Aboriginal heritage is unique to the Wet Tropics and is a remarkable and continuous Indigenous connection with a tropical rainforest environment.

To quote the Australian government, "the Aboriginal Rainforest people of the Wet Tropics of Queensland have lived continuously in the rainforest environment for at least 5,000 years and this is the only place in Australia where Aboriginal people have permanently inhabited a tropical rainforest environment" (Australian Government, 2012).

Rainforest Aboriginal people developed distinctive cultures determined by their dreamtime and creation stories and their traditional food gathering, processing and land management techniques. Reliance on their traditions has helped Rainforest Aboriginal people to survive in this at times inhospitable environment. The distinctiveness of the traditions and technical innovation and expertise needed to process and prepare toxic plants as food and the use of fire are of outstanding heritage value to the nation and are now protected for future generations under national environmental law.



Traditional burning practices, Yarrabah community (Wet Tropics Images / Brad Newton)



Ongoing customary obligations for country
(Wet Tropics Images / Brad Newton)

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Allison Halliday

Former Wet Tropics Management Authority
board director

The Wet Tropics was listed for its Aboriginal cultural values on the National Heritage List in November 2012. We are grateful for cultural heritage listing but are still waiting to see the results and benefits to fully understand what it means for us. We are still looking to government to take a lead. Given feelings of being disenfranchised and ignored at the time of the original World Heritage listing meant that the National Heritage Listing came as a great relief and sense of achievement. It represented the chance for something meaningful to happen. However, what does it mean now?

In November 2012, I told the Minister at the announcement of National Heritage listing of Indigenous values for the Wet Tropics that it was great that we now had those values recognised. However, it now had to turn into something meaningful for Traditional Owners. We have spent the best part of last five years to get here but for what? There is still a lot that needs to be done to realise benefits from the National Heritage Listing before we can really consider World Heritage listing. We are still waiting for a meaningful response.

What would help is if the mob could be better informed of what the differences are between National and World Heritage Listing in terms of our aspirations, and then it is more likely that they would undoubtedly support World Heritage re-listing for cultural values. There is an overall sense of being abandoned, let down. A good starting point would be an information campaign. For agencies to get out there and explain the difference and benefits. Now there are just a lot of misunderstandings and misconceptions. Community expectations have been consistently expressed but we are still waiting to see all agencies come into line to take up the challenges. Actions are being taken in communities including by prescribed bodies corporate, registered native title bodies corporate and other organisations to seek registration as cultural heritage bodies. We are also looking to access the Intellectual Cultural Property Kit, which was started a few years ago, so we can finish it and implement it. Overall, we are really seeking to get on the front foot by strengthening our own organisations to go forward and make things happen.

*We are grateful
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”

Reigniting the fire for the next 30 years

The principles that now guide the Authority's engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal people include:

- being a culturally responsible lead agency in collaboration with Rainforest Aboriginal people and the broader network, to ensure accountability to our commitments
- improving the way we do business by moving towards a better understanding of 'good practice' and strengthening enabling conditions for a rights-based approach to World Heritage conservation
- empowering Rainforest Aboriginal people to progress their agendas on their own terms
- showcasing good practice and success stories with a specific focus on different aspects of rights-based approaches.

The Authority has also continued to strengthen partnerships with Terrain NRM, the North Queensland Land Council, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and others to facilitate additional support for Rainforest Aboriginal people's interests and aspirations in relation to knowledge, culture and management practice in the Wet Tropics.

A regional workshop of Rainforest Aboriginal people in October 2017 has been instrumental in a process to commence reconciling outstanding differences from the past and to bridge the natural-cultural divide. A Traditional Owner-led terms of reference is currently guiding the free, prior and informed consent of Rainforest Aboriginal people in the current review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan and a Traditional Owner Leadership Group is driving a refresh of the Regional Agreement.

The Authority is committed to supporting Rainforest Aboriginal people into the future, by promoting and incorporating their rights, interests and aspirations in the management of the World Heritage Area. Future actions are to:

- implement a rights-based approach to World Heritage management in the Wet Tropics
- develop an Implementation Agreement to refresh the 2005 Regional Agreement
- empower Rainforest Aboriginal people's wellbeing and livelihoods
- support Rainforest Aboriginal people to exercise custodial relationships between their peoples and customary landscapes.

“ Allison Halliday

Former Wet Tropics Management Authority board director

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The first phase review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 commenced in 2017. We started getting traction again and were more positive about our involvement in management

again. The regional workshop on 21-22 October 2017 was a huge opportunity for Rainforest Aboriginal people to get together again and it became a real turning point, re-igniting the fire for many. I felt at that point of time a huge sigh of relief. I was asked to do a presentation at the workshop about the journey so far. Staff from the Authority and Terrain NRM are working closely together and supporting us to build momentum. Together we developed a pictorial timeline, a walking track, of our thirty-year journey which was easier for

We can't have a successful future until we acknowledge the massively hard work done by so many in the past.

people to identify with rather than words. It was good to see some familiar and unfamiliar faces but I really wanted to take everyone at the workshop along on the thirty-year journey, so we

can better shape our future hereafter. We can't have a successful future until we acknowledge the massively hard work done by so many in the past.

We are building the momentum to bring forward our aspirations into the now and to highlight them again so that they are achieved and implemented. There has been new optimism and direction established... there is a positive feeling about reviewing and refreshing the Regional Agreement and the commitment to action again.

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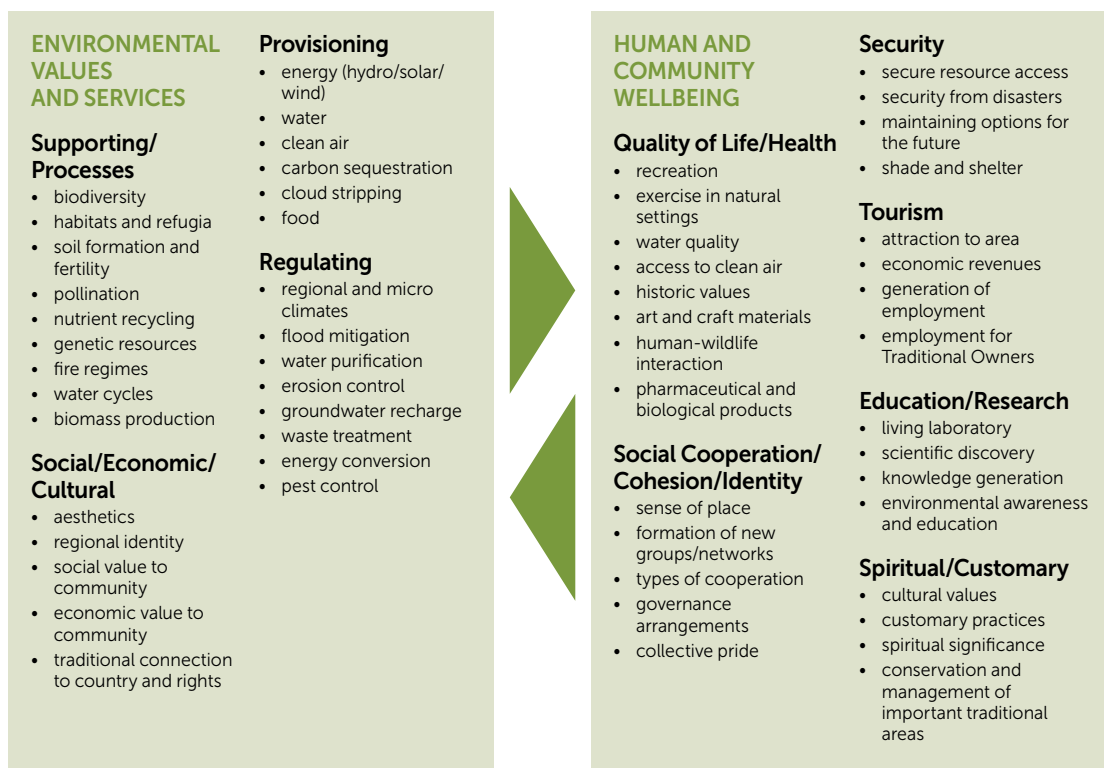
Collaboration and participation of stakeholders in World Heritage management

Despite its challenging start, it is well recognised now that the protection and management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has provided many benefits to the community. By its 20th anniversary, the World Heritage Area was totally entrenched in the community, with support for its listing growing from 50% in 1996 to over 80% in 2007.

There is strong recognition of the quality of life benefits derived by the community from the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. There are many opportunities within the Area for adventure trips, hiking, observing wildlife or simply relaxing within serene surroundings. The amazing evolutionary, ecological and cultural values of the Area also make it an unsurpassed educational asset and a living research laboratory.

Recent research indicates that residents believe the region's non-market ecosystem services, including those associated with aesthetics, recreation and preservation of the region for future generations are important to their quality of life, and are key factors in their choice of area to live and work. The collective worth to the region's natural values is likely to exceed \$5 billion annually (Esparon *et al* 2014), which includes the \$2.6 billion income associated with the tourism industry, plus additional values generated by non-market values associated with the worth the community places on the natural values and on ecosystem services such as clean air and water.

TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF SOME ENVIRONMENTAL GOODS AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE WET TROPICS WORLD HERITAGE AREA.



With more than 2,500 individual blocks of land neighbouring the World Heritage Area's 3,000km boundary, the active involvement of landholders and neighbours is crucial to the management of the Area. Wider representation for community engagement comes through a number of committees attached to management agencies and NRM organisations. In addition to its statutory functions, the Authority and its community and industry partners engage in a variety of activities in support of the World Heritage management.

One of the most important foundations for all of the Authority's work is its broad program of community engagement. The Authority works hard to ensure it remains connected with and responsive to community views about the World Heritage Area. The Authority places a particular priority on the rights and aspirations of Rainforest Aboriginal people, and the interests of the conservation and tourism sectors. To ensure decision-making is well grounded in evidence, the Authority also supports its Community Consultative Committee and Scientific Advisory Committee, comprising regional leaders and scientists from a wide range of disciplines.



Dr Lea M Scherl

Scientific Advisory Committee member

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Harnessing Social Capital in the Wet Tropics

There is an incredible amount of social capital in the Wet Tropics region—it has people from all sections of the community that helped achieve World Heritage listing in 1988. Activists, scientists and community groups worked together to form the social capital that helped establish and sustain the Area. World Heritage listing was based on the outstanding universal values of the Area but achieving it in practice also needed people to fight for it. This social and community capital is also critically important for the future.

Since the establishment of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority), the place and role of social capital has been wound back. The Authority took up its legitimate and mandated role (based on legislation and policy) and the Area has been managed through the more traditional government perspective on engagement. In this approach, the government decides how and when the engagement takes place.

We are now at a point where we need to think of the role of the Authority and how it works with partners in a slightly different way. We need the

Authority to be more of a facilitator, helping to establish collective roles and shared responsibility amongst many agencies, including Aboriginal organisations and the community sector. There is no one else that can really do this facilitation role successfully. The quantum leap is for the Authority to empower and support key stakeholder contributions to managing the Area, from scientists, conservationists, Traditional Owners, the tourism industry, neighbours and other government agencies. We do not have a clear vision of exactly how this might work but we have to put faith in the process and see where it can take us. In the end, it will help strengthen confidence and support for the Authority.

Looking to the future, the Authority will be stronger because it strengthens the relationships with the groups and interests that share concern and responsibility for the World Heritage Area.

It is about acknowledging and respecting what a wider collective of agencies and partners can do together. That is the essence of harnessing social capital. It is not about following an existing model or comparative case. It's about following and believing in the process. By working together, the process will take the Authority into a much better space. It recognises the potential that other actors and agencies makes in successful World Heritage Area management and lets them all play their part to contribute.

We are now at a point where we need to think of the role of the Authority and how it works with partners in a slightly different way.



Partnerships

Because of the Authority's small size and its limited operational roles, it has always had to rely on the commitment and cooperation of its partners in government, the community and in industry to ensure that the goals of the World Heritage Convention are achieved. These partnerships have evolved over the past 30 years as land ownership and management responsibilities have changed, as government priorities and investments have changed and as environmental management issues and community and industry interests and concerns have changed. A recent example of this is work currently undertaken in the Authority's Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program, which has been in operation since 2013.

Yellow crazy ant eradication: Partnerships in adaptive management

From the beginning, the Authority's Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program has demonstrated the power of strong and adaptable collaborations with a diverse range of partners, including the three tiers of government, education institutions, industry and residents.

Partners in the Program have demonstrated a concerted will to seek the most effective ways to achieve eradication, often through innovation and experimentation. Some examples of innovative ongoing partnerships include:

- Community champions volunteered their services and mobilised their local communities to participate in the eradication program, particularly when it was first established with limited resources. For example, Kuranda Envirocare, a local community group, attracted funding and over 100 volunteers who participated in monitoring and treatment and developed property land management plans within their local infestation.
- Frank Teodo, a local landholder south of Cairns, raised public awareness through the media and lobbied politicians about the impacts of yellow crazy ants on his property, himself and the cane industry. He also provided his land and house as an operational base for the initial eradication program.
- MSF Sugar, the Mulgrave Mill and the sugar industry are now helping the eradication program to find infestations and develop industry protocols to prevent the further spread of yellow crazy ants by harvesting machinery and cane trains.
- James Cook University is contracted to assist the program with research and monitoring of yellow crazy ants and the effectiveness of eradication methods. Collaborating with experts around the world, scientists continue to research the biology, life cycle and genetic distribution of yellow crazy ants, and the success of various treatment regimes. This partnership also led to successful negotiation of more effective permit conditions for the use of fipronil products with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority APVMA and the Department of the Environment and Energy.
- Local Aboriginal ranger groups from Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Djabugay actively participate in operational contracts and training programs.
- Local and state government representatives volunteer to undertake annual delimitation and treatment for a week each year.



Yellow crazy ant nest. (Wet Tropics Images/Biosecurity QLD)

The partnerships formed through the Program have raised the profile and broadened the community engagement of the Wet Tropics Management Authority. The eradication program has enabled the Authority to play an active on-ground conservation role, bringing together a diverse mix of stakeholders who might otherwise have little in common. Participants in the program feel inspired to work together to build a better tomorrow—protecting the biodiversity and enjoyment of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as well as protecting the prosperity of their industries and the integrity and enjoyment of their lands and lifestyles. The program also has provided further opportunities to educate the community about the unique biodiversity of the Area and the vital role that the Authority plays in protecting it.

Successes to date

The Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program has successfully:

- declared eradication at two infestation sites. A third is due to be declared in the second half of 2018
- halted the spread of ants on the western boundary within the World Heritage Area
- significantly reduced ant activity across the entire infestation area through broadscale treatments.

An independent review of the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program in 2018 concluded that local eradication can still be achieved. It praised the adaptive management of the program to date.



*Yellow crazy ants milking aphids for honeydew.
(Wet Tropics Images/Rhys Sharry)*



Operations team examining cane for evidence of white fly. (Wet Tropics Images/Rhys Sharry)

Another important partnership is how the Authority influences the practices of infrastructure agencies and land managers through the publication of best environmental practice guides. Examples include guides for road maintenance (Goosem *et al.*, 2010), electricity infrastructure (QESI, 2008), and water infrastructure (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2001). In some cases, initial work conducted by the Authority has influenced the development of codes of practice for road maintenance and electricity infrastructure now applied throughout Queensland.



Bruce Jennison

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Principal conservation officer, Wet Tropics Management Authority

Skyrail Rainforest Cableway is a 7.5 km scenic cableway running above Barron Gorge National Park, in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area, north of Cairns. It has won more than 25 international and national tourism

awards since its construction in 1994. While the Skyrail project certainly deserves all the accolades

and recognition it has garnered, an important part of the back-story was the commitment of Authority staff to work with Skyrail to set these high standards of environmental practice. The Authority, and previously the Cairns Rainforest Unit, took a strong interest in the minutiae of the design.

The Authority was never anti-development. We rarely said no. The only time we did say no, was to a proposed development of an old forestry road at the back of Russet Park, near Kuranda. The road traversed one of the narrowest vegetated corridors in the World Heritage Area in an area critical for ecological connectivity. This issue goes to the heart of how we are managing the World Heritage Area. The Black Mountain Corridor is one of the most

important corridors for fauna movement in all of the World Heritage Area. It just had to be protected. The idea of opening an old forestry road through such a critical ecological corridor was unthinkable and we

needed to say no because of almost certain long-term detrimental outcomes—regardless of the pressure we

received from a small section of the community seeking a new road access to their properties.

I came to this principal conservation officer role with the Authority with a very open mind. I focused on being enthusiastic and tried

to do things in innovative ways that would better protect the World Heritage Area. I was motivated to find ways and negotiate methodologies with developers

that minimised the impact of infrastructure on World Heritage. I would describe the approach as just trying to do the best things possible to minimise adverse impacts and reduce harmful effects. The approach

to developers has generally not been about saying no, but asking questions. For example, have you considered doing something different, something that better addresses good ecological and environmental outcomes and still provides for necessary infrastructure work? It is about encouraging innovation, education and setting the high standards you would expect for a World Heritage Area and doing so in a way that keeps people on side and cooperating.

The work on the regulatory aspects of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 deals with key sensitive areas such as where the boundaries of

national parks and the edges of roads and electricity corridors meet. Council reserves, infrastructure easements, power lines, areas along the

suburban edge. These are the key sensitive areas and where the important negotiations concerning edge effects and the impact of development on the management of protected areas meet.

The Authority was never anti-development. We rarely said no.

It is about encouraging innovation, education and setting the high standards you would expect for a World Heritage Area



Partners in science

The Authority promotes the Wet Tropics as a learning landscape to encourage the research and education communities to embrace the World Heritage Area as a living laboratory. Scientific research plays a critical role in providing the knowledge for informed decision-making and for the community to understand and appreciate the importance of the Area.

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is regarded as one of the best-studied patches of rainforest in the world (Laurance 2016). For this reason, and also for the calibre of work undertaken, research in the Area has raised global interest in similar tropical environments facing comparable problems like climate change and infrastructure impacts, fragmentation, and ecological restoration.

Research capacity and knowledge has developed rapidly in the Wet Tropics over the last 30 years through two rounds of Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre funding (Rainforest CRC, 1993–2006); the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF, 2006–2010); and the National Environmental Research Program (NERP, 2010–2014). A supersite was also established under Australia's Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network to capitalize on, and build upon, the environmental research legacy of the region.

One of the defining features of the Wet Tropics and the presence of its listing is its track record for environmental research excellence. A number of universities are active in research activities in the area, while James Cook University (JCU) and CQUniversity (CQUni) both have two campuses located near the Wet Tropics region (Cairns and Townsville). These are high performing research institutions; in 2016 JCU was ranked 22nd in the World for Environment and Ecology research (JCU, 2018), and among the top 12 tourism education institutions in the world, recognised for its special focus on ecotourism. CQUni is listed within the world's top two percent of universities due to its commitment to research, learning and teaching, internationalisation and student success. Without investment in these areas of research, the Wet Tropics will lose its scientific experts and global reputation, and lessen its influence and function in the life of both the regional and global communities.

The past research programs of the Rainforest CRC, MTSRF and NERP (which were supported and funded until 2014) all focussed on the environment and human interactions with it. These research programs involved Authority staff in various steering committee

and advisory roles, and in the determination of research direction and projects consistent with the Authority's Research Strategy and its board's and partner organisations' priorities.

The Area was World Heritage listed on the basis of scientific understanding, and research in the 30 years since listing has reinforced the international significance and the irreplaceability of the Area.

Despite past government research investments, current levels of activity, unfortunately, are declining. The Wet Tropics, with its research infrastructure and committed scientists, has great potential to join other well-studied tropical forest areas, such as La Selva in Costa Rica, the island of Barro Colorado in the middle of the Panama Canal and Tambopata Research Centre in Peru (Laurance 2008), in providing essential information on how tropical forests function, how they are responding to changing conditions and importantly, how they can best be managed to maintain their functions in the face of these changes.



Mt Lewis road (Paul Curtis Images)

Partners in visitation and tourism

World Heritage is a very powerful brand for the tourism industry. The tourism industry is a key partner in delivering better understanding of the outstanding universal value of the Wet Tropics through interpretation and presentation. The role of visitor information centres, tour guides and volunteers are critical to the success of connecting visitors to the World Heritage Area. Tourism, visitation and the tangible benefits it provides are valuable in giving the Area a function in the life of the community and in strengthening appreciation and support for the World Heritage Area.

The Authority has entered into joint ventures with the tourism industry and local governments to improve visitor experiences through the establishment and support of professional and knowledgeable visitor information centres. Tourism Tropical North Queensland is actively exploring opportunities to improve the marketing and interpretation of the values of the World Heritage Area to a broad domestic and international market.

The Authority continues to provide support to local businesses through our renowned tour guide training, sharing of information about the World Heritage Area and in joint development of interpretive products. The Authority provides advice to major tourism projects to ensure that they can proceed in line with high standards.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

National parks now make up 84% of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, a significant increase from the 14% of the area that existed in 1988. Due to this significant landholding within the region, the Authority maintains a strong partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS). The Authority has a formal partnership agreement with QPWS which ensures that national parks within the World Heritage Area are managed consistent with the World Heritage Convention. This means that the Authority and QPWS work collaboratively on pest and weed management strategies, fire management strategies, research, signage and interpretation, and on supporting Rainforest Aboriginal people in economic and land management activities on national parks.

QPWS officers actively participate in tour guide training (as experts and as participants) as well as the Community Consultative Committee, Scientific Advisory Committee, board meetings, and are active collaborators in the refresh of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement.



Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers. (Queensland Government)

World Heritage is our promise to the future – the next 30 years

With World Heritage listing comes an obligation to manage the Area “for the protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation and transmission to future generations of the World Heritage Area”.

That obligation—and the property’s enduring standing as the world’s oldest living tropical rainforest and an exemplar of outstanding universal value—is our promise to the future.

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has a rich history steeped in commitment, passion and controversy. Its listing was the culmination of communities respecting, living in, utilising and valuing the rainforest, over millennia for Rainforest Aboriginal people, and, more recently, for a regional community of diverse interests and perspectives.

Science—shaping our knowledge

Science strengthens community advocacy, and an abundance of research, reports and symposia demonstrated the outstanding natural value that led to the World Heritage nomination of the Area. Since that listing, science has continued to play a strong role in education, planning, management and addressing emerging challenges (such as yellow crazy ant eradication). Science has also underpinned regulatory tools for the Wet Tropics Management Authority on activities and development on the Area.

It was science too, that identified the Area as the second-most irreplaceable World Heritage site on Earth. It is science that will also galvanize protection, management and resilience over the next 30 years.

Despite its World Heritage listing, strong science foundation and its own legislation, the Area faces significant challenges. The threats posed by climate change, declining biodiversity, increasing pest species, extreme weather events, altered water flows and fire regimes, together with population growth, infrastructure demands and economic imperatives, suggest that while the campaign for listing has been won, there is a continuing struggle emerging for the future.

The 2017 UNESCO Conservation Outlook report supports this, stating the Area is “*protected by a strong and updated legislative framework, a dedicated independent Management Authority which enjoys broad community support, and a comprehensive suite of management strategies. However, the insidious and damaging threat posed by invasive plants, animals and diseases, and the high risk posed by the predicted impacts of climate change present real danger to the continuing integrity of the site’s biodiversity and associated endemic species.*”

Science, and the Authority’s Scientific Advisory Committee, will play a strong role in the response to these threats. These challenges are shared with World Heritage properties across Australia and globally, and collaboration and shared solutions will inform action locally.

Specific areas of science will become increasingly important, including technical approaches for preserving ecosystems and World Heritage values, such as regeneration, translocation, genetic engineering and biomimicry (Rosen, 2017).

Science requires resources, which, for the challenges being faced, will undoubtedly be insufficient to support all of the research and actions needed, and the Authority will need to prioritise the most critical science needs and investigate collaborative research partnerships.

A changing climate

Climate adaptation to maintain World Heritage values poses one of the most significant future threats to the World Heritage Area, and to World Heritage globally (Welbergen *et al* 2015). Whilst there is little the Authority can do to reduce global emissions and reverse climate trends, to meet its charter it must advocate for and take strong action to sustain the World Heritage values of the property, in collaboration with land managers, Rainforest Aboriginal people, industry and community.

At its 42nd meeting in Bahrain, the World Heritage Committee expressed “its continued concern about the impacts of climate change on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of World Heritage properties and reiterated the importance of State Parties undertaking the most ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” (UNESCO, 2018).



Professor Steve Williams

Former Wet Tropics Management Authority committee member

Is anybody listing to the canaries?

I started out studying the Wet Tropics as a university student during the 1990s. My association with the Wet Tropics is because of the high endemism, significant biodiversity and so many unique species that are found here and nowhere else.

At that time, my interest was in understanding biodiversity, in particular vertebrates, birds, animals and frogs. But around 2003, we did some projects looking into what potential impacts climate change might have and that really shocked me. The results suggested that nearly half of the species of everything I worked on could actually go extinct this century. My research priority evolved to better understand the impacts of climate change and what can be done.

I came to the realisation that everything that my research focused on faced a potential threat of extinction in the current century. Unfortunately, with climate change, the very special

are endemic species are the ones that are most at risk. They are at higher altitudes, above 600 metres. Increasing temperature pushes animals up the mountains in search of cooler air and because the mountains are not very high, the animals are running out of habitable space. They will eventually run out of altitude and have nowhere to go.

It is a bit depressing to find an area so well protected and managed like the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, but find that it does not actually help with an issue like climate change. When we started, it was about the possibility of extinctions and when they might occur at a time in the future. Unfortunately, extinctions are already happening. As we have been monitoring and testing our models, the decline in species populations and their resilience has actually been occurring and faster than we originally predicted. Already, we can detect significant declines in abundance of animals as they have been pushed up the mountains. Ringtail possums and Herbert River possums were being found regularly at 600 metres in our studies during 2007-08. They have since disappeared at this level. They are currently still stable at 800 metres but who knows for how much longer?

To put a time on it, by the 60th anniversary of the World Heritage Area we may well be facing the prospect that there are not many endemic species left. If not extinct, many species face massive decline over the next three decades. It underlines the overwhelming urgency of a response to climate change. I use to say climate change was one of the critical issues for the Wet Tropics. Now I think it just blows everything else out of the water. I think all of those issues are still important (things like invasive species, fire and drought), but I think they have been rapidly overtaken by climate change. In addition, of course, they interact with climate change.

The Great Barrier Reef has had massive impacts, visually obvious impacts, and it has attracted a lot of attention. I actually think that the threat to the Wet Tropics is equally severe and we will probably face proportionally higher levels of extinction than the reef. However, because it is not as visually obvious it has not attracted attention. It is vitally important for the Authority to help bring the risks into focus and advocate for more action and investment.

... the animals are running out of habitable space. They will eventually run out of altitude and have nowhere to go.



Unavoidable and extensive ecological deterioration is likely as a result of climate change, which will impact on the property's World Heritage values, potentially putting its listing at risk. Similarly, the natural and built assets vital to the tourism industry and that provide benefits to the wider community are at risk.

There has been considerable research and modelling to support planning for climate change, with a range of potential actions to reduce loss and negative impacts on biodiversity values. However, specific responses to clearly defined impacts, particularly on OUV, are urgently needed.

The Authority is preparing a climate resilience plan that will include a range of practical and strategic measures to give confidence to the community that action is being taken to ensure the World Heritage values of the Area are maintained to the greatest extent possible.

Community-led science

Critically important to science, research and on-ground action is the continuing support and involvement of communities. The integration of the traditional knowledge of Rainforest Aboriginal people with Western science provides a wealth of understanding and knowledge about managing country over thousands of years, including previous periods of climate change. The Authority has already established traditional knowledge as part of its Scientific Advisory Committee structure, and progressed a research protocol for involving traditional custodians of the Area in research activities.

The regional community has also played an important role in the practical application of science. A large number of groups and organisations have implemented projects that contribute to achieving the World Heritage obligation—including plant propagation, revegetation, threatened species recovery, pest eradication, education, data collection and monitoring.

In the future, the Authority will encourage increased public participation in research and on-ground activities to assist in the collection of data, and will sponsor citizen science projects to address critical challenges. It will continue to target its successful student grants program to priority issues, and expand its partnerships with industry and philanthropic organisations, like the Skyrail Rainforest Foundation, to ensure priority research and on-ground actions are progressed.

It's all about people—engaging the community

Ensuring the Area has a role in the life of the community is a fundamental commitment to World Heritage management. There is substantial support for the World Heritage rainforest with research showing that residents view the Area as an integral part of their landscape, lifestyle and community and feel a strong sense of collective ownership and responsibility (Carmody and Prideaux, 2008).

However, there will be changing expectations as populations grow, amid projections that the regional population will grow to 700,000 by 2050 (Cairns Regional Council, 2015). This will likely lead to demand for increased recreational experiences and access to the Area. Regional pressures for housing and other land uses in the region will potentially fragment vegetated corridors, placing heavy reliance on protected areas for maintenance of biodiversity. Services to support growth will be needed both inside and outside the Area, including reliable energy, improved roads, access to technology, water and other resources and economic and employment opportunities.

Whilst the Area is protected under both the World Heritage Convention and legislation, impacts from changes in and outside the property, coupled with increased usage by residents and visitors, will place significant pressure on the Area's values.

As we face these challenges, and the compounding challenges associated with biodiversity decline and climate change, the participation of the community will be crucial to meeting the World Heritage obligation.

Contemporary communications techniques, using multiple channels, will distribute information, educate and invite participation. More collaborative engagement and partnerships will be pursued across the Authority, government organisations and communities, to share responsibility and make well-informed, sustainable solutions on challenging issues. Those involved will necessarily be representative of the community, in terms of age, gender, affiliation and cultural background. This will require resources to support participation and ensure the range of factors and perspectives are known, respected and understood, particularly the perspectives of traditional custodians, and that legislative obligations, data and information are considered, expectations managed and results documented.

Rainforest Aboriginal people of the Wet Tropics

Despite the Area currently only being World Heritage listed for its natural values, it is a nationally-listed cultural heritage landscape and the land of the world's oldest living culture. One of Authority's most critical partnerships, now and into the future, is with the traditional custodians of the land on which the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is situated, the Rainforest Aboriginal people.

When the property was listed, there was little consideration of cultural values. The World Heritage listing was advanced before the Mabo decision, before native title legislation and when the World Heritage Convention had a strong distinction between natural and cultural heritage. The concept of free, prior, informed consent had not been fully considered.

Since then there has been substantial change, with stronger recognition of the biocultural values of the Area and acknowledgement that the land is and always has been the land of Rainforest Aboriginal people. Native title has been resolved or is continuing to be resolved, prescribed bodies corporate established, Indigenous Protected Areas dedicated, Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) negotiated and the first Wet Tropics land tenure resolution process is underway to return national park land to the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people.

The Authority's approach to consultation with the traditional custodians has also evolved towards more purposeful and collaborative engagement, focused on closer working relationships and maximising opportunities. However, many commitments of the Regional Agreement are yet to be realised, a number of ILUAs have expired and there is still a considerable way to go for Rainforest Aboriginal people to meaningfully share in decision-making and the economic benefits of the Area as full partners.

Over the next 30 years, it is foreseeable that all areas subject to native title will be determined, and that land tenure resolution or similar programs will see more land returned to Traditional Owners. As a result, the Area will have strong input from Aboriginal organisations in the decision-making and day-to-day management. Free, prior and informed consent using culturally appropriate governance methods will be used to progress management decisions, based on a refreshed Regional Agreement and negotiated ILUAs.

“

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Ro Hill

Former Wet Tropics Management Authority board director and committee member

The key challenges include accommodating Aboriginal traditional rights and especially how to bring Rainforest Aboriginal people's knowledge into management of the Area. Internationally, there now needs to be prior and informed consent for nomination of World Heritage areas.

I think there is an opportunity to go back and look for consent retrospectively. It's a different time now and that is reflected in the tenure changes.

Between 2008 and 2012 was big change in tenure. In 2008 we mapped that about 12% of the Wet Tropics had native title rights determined. By 2012 it's about 85%. That's a huge change and all the local groups have been recognised, they have got their country.

Now we need to look again at what co-government looks like. There is also a need to look into greater regional economic opportunities, along the lines of what has occurred at Mossman Gorge as Aboriginal-owned and run enterprise.

...there now needs to be prior and informed consent for nomination of World Heritage Areas.

”



Rainforest Aboriginal people's Regional Forum, October 2017
(Wet Tropics Images)

Embracing sustainable tourism

Tourism is the single biggest contributor to achieving the World Heritage Convention's goal of "presentation" and the tourism industry is a key partner in presenting the Area to visitors.

In a region that boasts two World Heritage properties – the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef, ecotourism providers are well-versed in its international significance, attractiveness for visitors and the global mandate for protection and sensitive use.

The UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Program supports "sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value" and sets out a cooperative framework "where planning for tourism and heritage management is integrated at a destination level, the natural and cultural assets are valued and protected, and appropriate tourism is developed" (UNESCO, 2018).

Whilst there are exceptional experiences now with over five million visits each year, the Area has an under-utilised potential for broadening the visitor experience and expanding the tourism product across its nearly 900,000 hectares.

Despite the many benefits, if poorly managed, tourism growth is not without risk. The World Heritage Committee has acknowledged the positive impact sustainable tourism can have on local communities and the protection of World Heritage properties. However, it has noted "concern that the number of properties negatively affected by inadequate visitor management and tourism infrastructure development continues to increase", requesting State Parties "to develop visitor management plans that assess appropriate carrying capacity of properties for visitors and address the issue of unregulated tourism" (UNESCO, 2018).

Planning a way forward – the Wet Tropics Management Plan

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is administered under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Act), and through the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* (the Plan), which is subordinate legislation under the Act. These set out a framework to protect the ecological, biological, evolutionary and scenic landscape attributes for which the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was listed. In the 30th anniversary year, the Wet Tropics Management Authority is reviewing the Plan towards

improved and less complex management, whilst maintaining the highest levels of protection.

The Australian World Heritage management principles establish that a management plan for a World Heritage property should, amongst other things, "state mechanisms to deal with the impacts of actions that individually or cumulatively degrade or threaten to degrade, the World Heritage values of the property; and provide that management actions for values that are not World Heritage values, are consistent with

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Tim Nevard

Tourism advocate

The Authority presented the first iteration of the Wet Tropics Management Plan (1998) as quite broad and encompassing. It was understood that the Plan could have an ecotourism component and establish a framework in which the World Heritage Area could accommodate and support a strong tourism industry. The subsequent drafting process of the Wet Tropics Management Plan and regulations however set limits to this broader approach. That left the tourism industry somewhat disappointed. The feeling amongst the tourism industry was that the opportunity for genuine partnership was lost, which led to a curtailment of momentum in what had been a very promising, developing relationship.

The 2017-18 the Wet Tropics Management Plan review process has provided a new opportunity to revisit tourism issues and the wider relationship with the tourism industry.

I was engaged to assist in the industry consultation with the hope and expectation that it will provide an opportunity for the Plan to reinvigorate meaningful partnerships, fostering the needs and interests of both the tourism industry and values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

...the Wet Tropics Management Plan review process has provided a new opportunity to revisit tourism issues and the wider relationship with the tourism industry.

the management of the World Heritage values of the property” (EPBC Regulation 2000, schedule 5).

Therefore a robust framework for decision-making is required in consideration of the values, science, community feedback, traditional cultural practice and current and emerging uses.

Share, connect, protect – the Authority’s role into the future

The Wet Tropics Management Authority was established under an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments with a primary goal “to provide for the implementation of Australia’s international duty for the protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation and transmission to future generations of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area within the meaning of the World Heritage Convention.”

The size and complexity of the Area, the people that live in or near it, and the many people and groups that visit, as well as their potentially profound effect on its future, are acknowledged in the Agreement.

Having a statutory body with an independent board of directors dedicated to meeting Australia’s World Heritage obligation for the Area has provided numerous advantages. It has been able to advise, report on, and make recommendations direct to Australian and Queensland government ministers about the Area. It has enabled the Authority to develop and implement policies, programs and statutory instruments for effective management of the property. Through those instruments, it has been able to consider, assess and influence the outcomes of proposals and activities within the Area. It has entered into partnerships and cooperative agreements with landholders, Rainforest Aboriginal people and industry sectors, for the sustainable use, enjoyment, advancement and rehabilitation of the Area, gathered research and information to support decisions and management options, and administered funding across a wide range of activities, grant programs and contracts.

However, those policies and plans have been viewed by some sectors as not strong enough, and by others as too strong and inflexible. At times, they have largely been achieved without the meaningful involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal people. The new statutory Wet Tropics Management Plan 2019-2029, developed in stronger collaboration with the community, will set a new framework for achieving the primary goal.

Education, awareness and advocacy, will be increasingly important for strengthening appreciation of the exceptional values and global significance of the Area. Sharing knowledge will be an important focus to garner support for a determined response to climate change impacts and other challenges.

Partnerships will be essential for improving protection and presentation of the Area. Science partnerships will ensure the right priorities and the right knowledge for protecting and managing the Area is available. Partnerships with the tourism sector will attract new investment, manage visitation and help to position the Wet Tropics as a world class destination for visitors. Partnerships with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service will be maintained to ensure that collaborative delivery of key strategies will continue to meet community expectations of World Heritage management. Partnerships with community groups will see a wide range of restoration, recovery, conservation and education projects delivered, along with continuing advocacy for the area. Increasingly, the Authority will need to identify the high priority interventions and connect communities, governments at all levels and other stakeholders with an interest to take action.

The declaration of the Wet Tropics as a World Heritage property has ensured the protection of its outstanding universal value for the past 30 years. In the coming years, to fulfill its primary goal and keep the World Heritage standing will require the meaningful participation of Rainforest Aboriginal people, communities, the tourism industry and the research community, together with robust science, strong management planning and a committed statutory authority under cooperative government leadership. The commitment, passion and advocacy of those communities will ensure its World Heritage standing over the next 30 years.



Headland between Myall Beach and Cape Tribulation Beach
(TTNQ Images)

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Creek in the Daintree (TTNQ Images)

Abbreviations

ARC	Aboriginal Rainforest Council
AWHIN	Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network
CCC	Community Consultative Committee
CQU	Central Queensland University
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
INF	Interim Negotiating Forum
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JCU	James Cook University
MTSRF	Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility
NERP	National Environmental Research Program
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
RAAC	Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee
SAC	Scientific Advisory Committee
SAP	Structural Adjustment Package
The Area	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area
The Authority	Wet Tropics Management Authority
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Appendix 1. A chronology of the protection and management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area

Pre-European Settlement	Aboriginal people occupied, used and enjoyed land in the Area prior to the arrival of Europeans.
Early 1870s to mid 1980s	Colonisation and dispossession of Aboriginal traditional lands. Traditional lands reduced to a few small Aboriginal reserves.
1791	Samples of red cedar were dispatched from Australia to London (November 1791). Admiralty ordered that convict ships on their return journey to England should carry as much red cedar as possible.
1842	Special decree by Governor Gipps (colony of NSW) that no timber licences were to be granted in any rainforest north of Brisbane containing Bunya Pine (in recognition of its importance to Aboriginal people).
1859	Separation of the colony of Queensland from New South Wales.
1860	First timber regulations proclaimed and licence system introduced in Queensland.
1873	Dalrymple explored coastal valleys and ranges between Cardwell and Cooktown assessing the potential of the land for development.
1874	Timber cutters commenced logging of red cedar and kauri pine.
1875	Government formed a select committee to report on forest conservancy in Queensland.
1877	Cedar of the Daintree and Mossman valleys reported as totally cut-out.
1881	Cedar cutters extended operations to western margin of Atherton Tableland.
1881	33 general timber licences issued at Herberton. By end of 1881 a total of 9 million superfeet of cedar logged.
1881	Sugar cane farms established on coastal lowlands.
1882	Christy Palmerston, a prominent bushman and pathfinder, explored ranges between Port Douglas and Cairns, then a stock route between Herberton and Innisfail (parts of the Palmerston Highway, K-tree Road and West Palmerston Road)
1882	Rainforests of the Atherton Tablelands opened up for selection – first dairying commenced on the Atherton Tableland to supply dairy products to miners on the goldfields (dairying accelerated rainforest selection and clearing).
1882	Export of red cedar through Port Douglas ends as all trees near streams had been removed.
1882	Carl Lumholtz (naturalist explorer) explored the Herbert River district.
1883-86	Palmerston discovered gold in Jordan Creek area and lower Russell River.
1886	George Russell discovered gold in upper terraces of Russell River.
1887	Palmerston, with a companion believed to be Wilkam Leighton, successfully located and blazed a route from the lowlands near Port Douglas to the Tablelands (the Bump Track) in April 1877. The route was later cleared in July 1877.
1889	By 1889 the following timbers were being milled in the Wet Tropics: red cedar, beech, kauri pines, black bean, silkwood, hickory, acacia cedar, satinwood and pencil cedar.
1891- 1893	Railway progressed from Cairns and Kuranda to Mareeba.
1897	Two small sawmills operating in Cairns.
1901	The Commonwealth of Australia came into being as a Federation of what had previously been six colonies which then became six states (1 January). Constitution came into force.
1902	Three sawmills operating in Atherton.
1906	<i>State Forests and National Parks Act of 1906</i> gazetted which included royalty-based sales instead of simple licensing.

1921	Bellenden Ker National Park gazetted.
1924	Cairns linked to Brisbane by rail.
1929	Publication of the illustrated field guide <i>Australian Rain Forest Trees</i> (Francis 1929).
1931	Edward Swain, Forestry Director, criticised land settlement policies. Led to a Royal Commission to investigate conflict between land settlement and forestry. Swain dismissed for his attempts to retain greater areas of rainforest.
1932	Hinchinbrook Island National Park gazetted.
1934	Lakes Barrine and Eacham national parks gazetted.
1936	Public Estate Improvement Scheme commenced as a measure to reduce post-depression unemployment and to open-up access to several timber reserves and state forests (1936-1943). Examples include construction of Black Mountain Road (Kuranda to Julatten), B Road (Danbulla), Kennedy-Kirrama Road.
1940	Barron Gorge National Park gazetted.
1947	Queensland Government decrees that all timber logged in the region had to be processed locally (previously much was exported as logs).
WW2	Construction of the Kuranda-Mareeba Road by American forces.
Post WW1	Soldier resettlement schemes – opening-up of Malaan, Mena Creek and Utchee Creek areas.
1952	Tree marking introduced (trees selected for cutting paint-marked with direction of fall indicated).
1958	Len Webb's (rainforest ecologist) classification of Australian rainforests.
1960	Forest Inventory System introduced (permanent monitoring plots).
1960s	Last massive clearing (42,900 ha) occurred in the lower Tully River valley (King Ranch).
1966	Len Webb put forward a series of national park proposals, designed to protect the full range of the remaining habitats of the Wet Tropics (first time in Australia). <i>The Identification and Conservation of Habitat Types in the Wet Tropic Lowlands of North Queensland</i> . This was also the first reference in the scientific literature to the international significance of the lowland rainforests. (Note: lowlands were defined as areas below 1000 ft contour). The proposals were confined to the lowlands because of the extraordinary development pressures placed on the lowlands from about 1955 onwards.
1971	Establishment of CSIRO Tropical Forest Research Station in Atherton.
1973	Peter Stanton reviewed status of reserves in the lowlands and identified additional areas for reservation.
1974	Biosphere Reserve model proposed for the region by the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) section of UNESCO but State Government declined to proceed.
1974	Rainforest Conservation Society established.
1974	Australian Government inquiry into the National Estate and recognition of the urgent need to conserve rainforests.
1975	Creation of separate National Parks and Wildlife Service (previously a Department of Forestry function).
1975	Commonwealth establishes the Australian Heritage Commission and introduces National Estate legislation.
1975	Overall classification and mapping of Wet Tropics forests by Tracey and Webb.
1976	Focus on our Northern Heritage – workshop organised by WPS in Cairns.
1978	Conservation groups nominated several areas for listing on the National Heritage Register.
1980	Second World Wilderness Congress held in Cairns (June 1980).

1980	Australian Heritage Commission listed a number of rainforest areas (Greater Daintree region – 350,000 ha) on the Register of the National Estate (October 1980).
1980	State Parliament presented with a petition signed by 12,000 Queenslanders seeking protection of the Wet Tropics rainforests.
1981	Mt Windsor logging operations blockaded by conservationists (13 people arrested) in November 1981.
1981	Australian Conservation Foundation launched the Rescue the Rainforest campaign in Cairns and the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre was formed.
1981	The original proposals by the conservation movement was for a "Greater Daintree National Park" including only the Cape Tribulation NP, Roaring Meg/Alexandra Creek catchments, Daintree River catchment, Mt Windsor Tableland, Mt Spurgeon, Mossman Gorge, Mt Lewis, Cedar Bay area and Walker Bay area.
1982	Bernie Hyland's (taxonomist) card key for the identification of rainforest trees of north Queensland published.
1982	Descriptions of Wet Tropics vegetation types published by Geoff Tracey (rainforest ecologist): <i>The Vegetation of the Humid Tropical Region of North Queensland</i> .
1982	The impetus for World Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics came with the 1982 publication "The World's Great Natural Areas" and included on IUCN's 1982 list of places deserving World Heritage protection.
1983	Clearing commenced for a new Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road. Construction started December 1983 to be met by a blockade of protesters. Elevated the campaign to national and international levels and drew the Federal Government into the debate.
1983	Two significant events occurred at the national level in 1983. The first was the election of Bob Hawke on 5 March on the promise of saving Tasmania's Franklin, and secondly, the landmark High Court ruling in the Tasmanian Dams Case on 1 July which validated the new <i>World Heritage Properties Conservation Act</i> which became law on 22 May 1983. The Act was necessary to protect the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area which had been listed in 1982.
1984	Cape Tribulation-Bloomfield Road blockade continued.
1984	Australian Heritage Commission engaged the Rainforest Conservation Society of Queensland to evaluate and report on the international conservation significance of the Wet Tropics between Cooktown and Townsville (January 1984). The report (completed in June 1984) concluded that the area met all four natural heritage criteria and this finding was supported by several international referees.
1984	Conservationists from around Australia met in Brisbane to form a national coalition to seek listing of the Wet Tropics as a World Heritage site.
1984	Rainforest management conference held in Cairns. As a result of this workshop the Federal Government initiated a national rainforest conservation program.
1984	General Assembly for IUCN passed a resolution recognising the value of the Wet Tropics.
1985	Downey Creek logging blockade.
1986	Opinion poll found 61% of North Queenslanders supported cessation of logging in virgin rainforest.
1986	Commonwealth establishes a \$22.5 million National Rainforest Conservation Program but Queensland Government refuses to participate.
1987	Norman Myers emphasises the importance of protecting Australia's wet tropical forests.
1987	Commonwealth announced (5 June 1987 just prior to the 1987 election) that they would proceed immediately and unilaterally towards nomination of the Wet Tropics to the World Heritage list.
1987	A Federal Rainforest Unit, with offices in Canberra and in Cairns, was established in July 1987 to co-ordinate Commonwealth action in relation to the protection of the proposed area.

1987	Queensland establishes the Northern Rainforest Management Agency (NORMA) to co-ordinate rainforest management planning of the Wet Tropics (August 1987).
1987	Senator Graham Richardson announced the indicative boundary for a World Heritage nomination and launches a public consultation process to obtain views and to help decide the final boundary and to assist in the development of socio-economic strategies to offset impacts. The public comment phase elicited 1,350 suggestions for changes to the indicative boundary. As a result of the reassessment almost 100 square kilometres of freehold land, recently cleared land, some eucalypt forests and areas with exotic plantations were excised from the nominated area.
1987	Commonwealth released final boundaries for the proposed nomination to the public (11 December 1987) and announced it was proceeding with the nomination.
1987	Social Impact Assessment commissioned by Commonwealth.
1987	Nomination presented to the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee on 23 December 1987 based on proposal prepared by the Rainforest Conservation Society.
1987	Through the act of nomination of the Wet Tropics, the Commonwealth assumed responsibility under the <i>World Heritage Convention</i> to protect the outstanding universal values of the region. Successive High Court decisions confirmed that the "external affairs power" in the Australian Constitution supports Federal laws that give effect to obligations contained in international treaties to which Australia is a party. To the extent that a law of an Australian State is inconsistent with such a Federal law, the State law would be invalid.
1988	In January 1988, Commonwealth Environment Minister Graham Richardson assures Rainforest Aboriginal people that activities such as hunting and gathering will not be stopped on DOGIT lands in the Wet Tropics as a result of World Heritage listing.
1988	Commonwealth decided that logging was incompatible with protection of these values and made a regulation under the <i>World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983</i> to prevent activities associated with commercial forestry operations in the area covered by the nomination.
1988	Commonwealth decided that Quaid's Road (Southedge Road) was incompatible with protection of these values and made a regulation under the <i>World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983</i> to prevent activities associated with opening the road in the Area covered by the nomination.
1988	Commonwealth released proposals for the management of the Area. This document established the context and objectives of management and suggested mechanisms by which management would be implemented. Central to the scheme was the establishment of a joint State-Commonwealth management authority.
1988	Submission against listing from shire councils.
1988	Commonwealth established the Wet Tropics of Queensland Structural Adjustment Package to offset the impacts of the cessation of logging (\$75.3 million).
1988	Amendments to the Commonwealth's <i>World Heritage Properties Conservation Act</i> were enacted in March 1988 to more fully exercise the Federal Government's constitutional powers and to strengthen interim protection for potential World Heritage sites.
1988	The proposed World Heritage Area is listed on the Register of the National Estate on 26 April 1988 under the <i>Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975</i> .
1988	In June 1988 a Queensland anti-delegation team, consisting of the Queensland Environment Minister, two Traditional Owners, and 16 other delegates, was sent to Paris to rally against World Heritage listing.
1988	The Chairman of Yarrabah Council writes to the Commonwealth Environment Minister in June 1988 voicing an opposition to the inclusion of Aboriginal lands in the nominated area.
1988	At its meeting in Paris (June 1988) the Bureau recommended the Area (then called the "Wet Tropical Rainforests of North-east Australia") be inscribed as a World Heritage area but requested the Commonwealth to provide clarification and further information on several points, particularly in relation to future management arrangements involving the State and Federal governments, and a revision of the proposed boundaries to exclude areas which did not contribute significant natural values.

1988	Commonwealth boundary review team held discussions with representatives of local government bodies in the week commencing 22 August 1988.
1988	Commonwealth boundary review team examined in detail two large areas (approximately 30,000 ha – Mt Windsor Tableland and 60,000 ha – Paluma Range) and 67 small areas. The small areas considered for exclusion were the irregularly shaped boundaries, isolated blocks, fingers protruding from the main area, or areas where new information had become available. Consideration was also given to adding small areas that would lead to a more coherent nomination. A total of 31 areas were excised (totalling about 6,300 ha) and eight areas (totalling about 630 ha) were added. An additional area of land at Mt Leach was treated separately. The review team found no scientific justification for major changes to the boundary.
1988	DASETT prepared a report to the World Heritage Committee Secretariat (September 1988) addressing the recommendations of the Bureau, particularly information on future management, boundaries, land ownership and use of the area, including traditional non-commercial purposes by Aboriginal people. The report suggested a more appropriate name for the nominated area should be the “ <i>Wet Tropics of Queensland</i> ” previously the nominated area was referred to as the “Wet Tropical Rainforests of North-east Australia”.
1988	State and Commonwealth could not reach agreement. Commonwealth ignored State protests and resubmitted its nomination report in October 1988 with a reduction of 1% of the area originally nominated.
1988	In November 1988 the Chairperson of Yarrabah Council again writes to the Commonwealth Environment Minister opposing the inclusion of Aboriginal lands in the nominated area.
1988	At meeting in Brasilia in December 1988, the World Heritage Committee formally accepted the Commonwealth nomination and the Area was officially inscribed on the World Heritage list (9 December 1988). 12th Session of the World Heritage Committee meeting in Brasilia, Brazil from 5-9 December 1988.
1989	State Government’s legal challenge to the constitutional validity of the listing was rejected by the High Court (30 June 1989).
1989	Labor Government elected in Queensland (2 December 1989) which withdrew challenge in the Federal Court that selection logging did not detract from World Heritage values.
1990	Commonwealth and new Queensland Government sign the <i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Management Scheme</i> – an intergovernmental agreement. The agreement is scheduled to the Queensland Act and given effect by s.3 of the Commonwealth Act. This agreement comprised an exchange of correspondence agreeing to broad structural and funding arrangements for the management scheme (November 1990), including development of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Wet Tropics Management Agency.
1990	A Ministerial Council is established comprising two Federal Ministers and two State Ministers.
1991	World Heritage Bureau (June 1991) expressed concern at delays in the management planning process, lack of funds for field management activities, the pace of tourism development and a proposed hydropower development (Tully-Millstream scheme).
1992	Establishment of the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Staff and executive director comprised the Wet Tropics Management Agency. The Wet Tropics Management Authority is what is now referred to as the Board. The current usage of Authority and Board occurred when we became a statutory authority following gazettal of the <i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i> .
1992	Wet Tropics Management Plan consultation started (March 1992) with a discussion paper and questionnaire called: “ <i>Wet Tropics Plan: Your First Invitation to Comment</i> ”.
1992	<i>Wet Tropics Plan: Strategic Directions</i> published August 1992.
1992	World Heritage Committee (December 1992) noted with satisfaction the level of progress made in instituting management arrangements, drafting legislation, improving budgetary allocations, and rehabilitating degraded forest areas.
1992	Queensland’s <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> gazetted.
1992	Rainforest Aboriginal Network (RAN) established - as first Rainforest Aboriginal representative entity.

1993	Queensland legislation: <i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i> proclaimed on 1 November 1993 (apart from ss.56 and 57). The Act provides for the establishment, functions and powers of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and its Board. The functions of the Authority set out in the Act loosely amalgamate the functions of the former Authority and the Agency from the WTWHA Management Scheme.
1994	Commonwealth and State announce joint funding of \$23 million over four years for the Daintree Rescue Program.
1994	Commonwealth legislation: <i>Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act 1994</i> proclaimed on 15 March 1994.
1994 /1995	Bama Wabu replaces the RAN as representative organisation for Rainforest Aboriginal interests.
1995	Bama Wabu begins a review into Aboriginal involvement in World Heritage management.
1995	Draft Wet Tropics Plan placed on public exhibition (October 1995). The draft remained on public exhibition for over six months.
1995	A revised version of the intergovernmental agreement signed (December 1995).
1997	Wet Tropics Plan gazetted on 7 August 1997 and its provisions were due to come into force on 1 November 1997 but subsequently repealed due to court challenge.
1997	<i>Protection Through Partnerships: Policies for implementation of the Wet Tropics Plan</i> published (August 1997).
1998	<i>Wet Tropics Management Plan</i> gazetted on 22 May 1998 and came into force on 1 September 1998.
1998	Proclamation of ss.56 and 57 of the <i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i> occurred on 1 September 1998.
1998	At the June 1998 World Heritage Bureau meeting the issue of possible land clearing within the World Heritage Area was raised by NGOs. This triggered the need to formally respond through the process of a World Heritage Reactive Report coordinated by ACIUCN to determine whether the Wet Tropics should be placed on the list of World Heritage in Danger.
1988	<i>Which Way Our Cultural Survival? The Review Of Aboriginal Involvement in the Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area</i> prepared by the Review Steering Committee in 1998.
1999	Commonwealth's <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act) gazetted.
1999	<i>World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983</i> repealed by the <i>Environmental Reform (Consequential Provisions) Act 1999</i> .
1999	<i>Vegetation Management Act 1999</i> gazetted.
2000	State Party's Response Report to the World Heritage Reactive Report developed, establishing State Party's benchmark response to the ACIUCN focused recommendations.
2000	Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy published August 2000.
2001	Wet Tropics Walking Strategy published October 2001.
2001	<i>The Interim Negotiating Forum (INF)</i> begins. The process is aimed at developing an agreement which would address the 163 recommendations put forward by the Review Steering Committee in <i>Which Way Our Cultural Survival</i> produced from the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council sponsored <i>Review of Aboriginal Involvement in the Management of the WTWHA</i> .
2001-2004	The INF conducted nine forums and several regional workshops (attended each time by up to 300 Aboriginal people) to develop the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement.
2002	Wet Tropics first Periodic Report prepares and submitted to Environment Australia as requested by UNESCO.

2002	Rainforest CRC preparation of draft Statement of <i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Significance for the Wet Tropics Region of North Queensland</i> .
2003	Name change from Lumholtz National Park to Girringun National Park.
2004	Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy published September 2004.
2005	The Authority establishes the Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAAC) under s.40 of the Wet Tropics Act as prefaced by the in-principle Wet Tropics Regional Agreement.
2005	The Wet Tropics Regional Agreement is signed by 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups, the Australian Government, the Queensland Government and the Authority.
2005	Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee appointed under the Act as an advisory committee to the Board.
2005	The Wet Tropics Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan (the Bama Plan) is launched by over 17 Wet Tropics Tribal Groups and Terrain NRM.
2005	The Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC) is established and has representation from all 18 tribal groups. The ARC is an outcome of the Interim Negotiating Forum (INF) and is recognised and supported in the Regional Agreement.
2005	Transfer of 39 forest reserves and three other land parcels in the Wet Tropics (totalling 380,000ha) to national park tenure (mostly within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area).
September 2005	The Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC) is established and has representation from all 18 tribal groups. The ARC is an outcome of the INF and is recognised and supported in the Regional Agreement.
2005	Data capture and digitisation of the 1:50,000 vegetation mapping of the Wet Tropics completed in August.
2006	The <i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i> is amended to allow for a second Aboriginal board member.
2007	Kuku Yalanji Indigenous Land Use Agreement signed for much of the World Heritage Area from Mossman north to the Bloomfield area.
2007	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area listed on the National Heritage List.
2008	The ARC ceases operation.
2008	Twentieth anniversary of World Heritage listing – recognised by publication of 'From the Heart'.
2009	COAG abolishes all Ministerial Councils. In the Wet Tropics this is replaced with an annual Ministerial Forum.
2009	Focus group becomes North Queensland Traditional Owner Land and Sea Management Alliance and has inter-regional interests including the Dry Tropics and Northern Gulf.
2011	Terrain NRM Traditional Owner Advisory Group advises Terrain Board that it would disband.
2012	Retrospective listing of the World Heritage Area as a serial nomination for 14 separate sections.
2012	Retrospective statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the Wet Tropics of Queensland adopted by the World Heritage Committee in St Petersburg.
2010 -2012	Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance (RAPA) established – a non-incorporated alliance between the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation and Central Wet Tropics Institute. This alliance has memberships of individuals and organisations covering the Wet Tropics.
2012	The Wet Tropics is listed as a National Landscape.
2012	National Heritage listing of the World Heritage Area for Indigenous heritage values.
2013	Twenty-fifth anniversary of World Heritage listing.
2018	Thirtieth anniversary of Wet Tropics World Heritage listing.

Appendix 2. *In their own words* contributors



Peter Hitchcock

Executive Director (1991-1997)

Peter was the inaugural executive director of the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

He has over 40 years of experience working internationally as an environment and heritage consultant, specialising in protected areas and World Heritage. He is also an advisor to the Papua New Guinea, South Asia, Guyana, Lebanon, Indonesia and Borneo governments on policy and field operations, as well as serving two terms on the Australian Heritage Commission.



Associate Professor Peter Valentine

Chair of the Wet Tropics Board (2010-2013); Chair of Community Consultative Committee (1995-2000); Wet Tropics Board Director 2000-2006; Chair Conservation sector Liaison Group (2000-2006) and Scientific Advisory Committee member (2007-2010)

Peter has served in a number of roles for the Authority since it was first established, leading to a distinguished term as chair of the Authority. Peter was a senior academic at James Cook University, and in 1988, was appointed as the special IUCN reviewer of Wet Tropics World Heritage nomination. Peter has a particular interest in management issues for protected areas and related nature conservation issues, particularly the use of ecotourism to support conservation and development, especially in poorer countries in the Asia-Pacific region.



Professor Stephen Williams

Chair Scientific Advisory Committee (2011-14) and Scientific Advisory Committee member (2007-2010)

Professor Steve Williams is based at the Centre for Tropical Biodiversity and Climate Change at James Cook University. Steve is chair of the IUCN Climate Change and Biodiversity Specialist Group. His research is focussed on understanding biodiversity, assessing the vulnerability of biodiversity to global climate change and using this knowledge to maximise the positive benefits of conservation management and adaptation. He was one of the first to identify global climate change as a severe threatening process in the tropics and that we are facing many species extinctions in mountain systems globally. This work resulted in the Australian Wet Tropics being internationally recognized by the IPCC as one of the world's most vulnerable ecosystems.



Dr Lea M. Scherl

Scientific Advisory Committee member (2010-2013 and 2016 to present)

Dr Lea M. Scherl is an environmental and social psychologist who has had a long association with the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area, including: involvement in the advocacy for World Heritage listing; serving in the Authority's first Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC); and contributing to a range of planning processes and reports. As a long-term resident of North Queensland Dr Scherl has travelled extensively through the World Heritage Area, enjoying many of its attributes and environmental services. She is currently a member of the SAC, contributes to teaching and research at James Cook University and works for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.



Dr Rosemary (Ro) Hill

Wet Tropics Board Director (2012-2015); Community Consultative Committee member (1995-1998) and Scientific Advisory Committee member (2000-2008)

Ro is a leader within the conservation movement and was first vice-president of the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC). She was central to the environmental campaigns that led to the establishment of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Ro has extensive experience in cross-cultural research with indigenous peoples and in collaborative knowledge platforms. She is a member of the IUCN Commission on Environment Economic and Social Policy, the World Commission on Protected Areas, and the expert taskforce for Indigenous and local knowledge of the intergovernmental platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services.



Ms Allison Halliday

Wet Tropics Board Director (2008-2012)

Allison Halliday identifies as a rainforest Bama of the Malanbarra Clan of the Yidinji Tribe. She is chair of the Dulabed Malanbarra and Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC as well as a director on the Terrain NRM board. Allison has been actively involved in Aboriginal issues in the Wet Tropics since 1994. As co-chair of the Aboriginal Negotiating Team for the Rainforest Aboriginal People of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, she officially signed off on the Regional Agreement with both State and Commonwealth governments. Allison continues to play a leadership and advisory role as a key member of the Traditional Ownership Leadership Group. Whilst board director of the Authority, Allison was appointed to the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee and the Australian Indigenous World Heritage Advisory Committee.



Bruce Jennison

Principal Conservation Officer (1994-present)

Bruce manages the environmental assessment and regulatory work for the Wet Tropics Management Authority. With over 30 years' experience in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, Bruce has expertise in planning, conservation management and environmental impact assessment and has developed high level skills in consultation, policy development, legislation and project management. He is particularly interested in issues associated with managing urban planning and infrastructure development in a tropical environment and specialises in the rehabilitation of tropical vegetation systems.



Tim Nevard OAM

Tourism advocate

Tim has committed his working life to conservation, sustainable agriculture, design and development, and has successfully initiated and managed corporate branding and sustainability programmes in the development, fast-moving consumer goods and agricultural sectors.

He has extensive hands-on experience of the financial aspects of nature conservation and land management, especially in relation to market mechanisms, and has a particular interest in sustainable development and agriculture, as well as habitat restoration, conservation breeding and recovery.

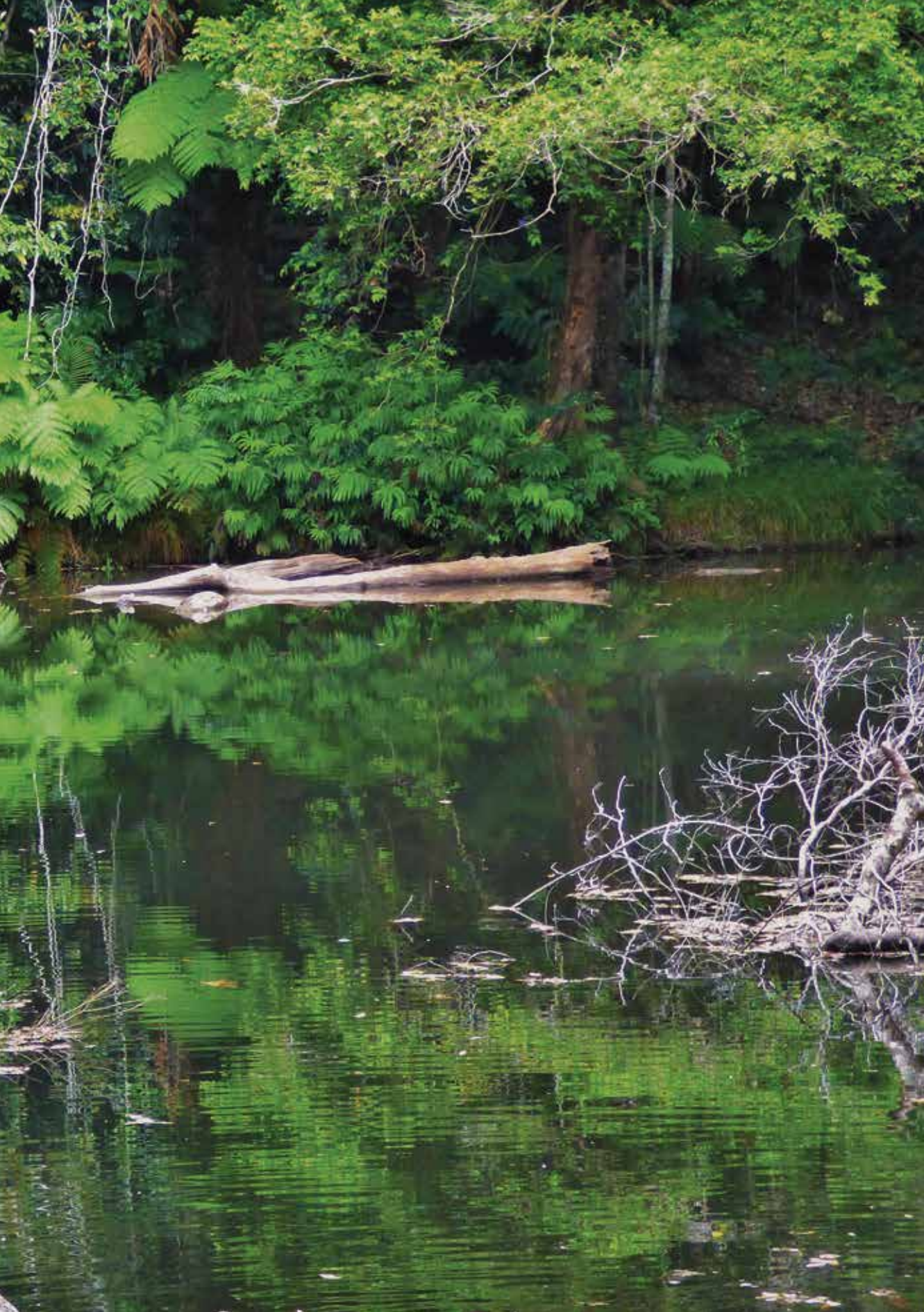
Tim was one of the founders and deputy MD of the RPS consulting group and in 1996 conceived and developed the Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve; and co-founder of the Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland/Forever Wild. He was the founding director of the Centre of Tropical Urban and Regional Planning at James Cook University from 1994-99 and principal scientist at GHD from 2002-7. He has served as a ministerial appointee on a number of industry and academic bodies.



Late afternoon at Mossman Gorge (TTNQ Images)



World Heritage is our promise to the future (Lisa Jackson)





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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Stoney Creek (Wet Tropics Images / Charlotte Hellings)