

Board Meeting No. 133

21 November 2025

FINAL MINUTES

Wet Tropics Management Authority

Wet Tropics Management Authority
Ports North Building
PH: 07 4041 0500

Agenda item 1.1

Chair's welcome and introduction, and apologies

The Chair, Ms Grant, advised that apologies have been received from Ms Karger, Mr Evans, Ms Siggery, and Dr Playford.

Mr Buchanan, through the Chair introduced Ms Naomi Summers as the new Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) Board intern, who will be participating with the Board until July 2026.

The Chair provided an Acknowledgement of Country, welcomed all attendees, and invited attendees to indicate the Country from which they are joining the meeting in the online meeting chat.

In Attendance:

Board Directors:

Ms Chrissy Grant	Chair
Dr Sally Driml	Director
Ms Ailsa Lively	Director
Mr William Enoch-Tranby	Director
Ms Natassia Wheeler	Director
Mr Michael Nelson	Director
Mr Scott Buchanan	Non-voting Director and Executive Director

Partners:

Erin Dampney	Director, First Nations Heritage Division
Elise Nuridin	Senior Heritage Policy Officer
Blythe Neville	Heritage and Policy Officer, First Nations Heritage Section, DCCEEW
Renee Beckitt	Regional Director, Northern Region, QPWS&P
Dr Matt Brien	A/Director, Smithfield and Wangetti Delivery Team, QPWS&P
Naomi Summers	Intern Board Director
Prof. Steve Williams	Chair Scientific Advisory Committee

WTMA Staff:

Tim Wong	Manager, Planning and Conservation
Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez	Manager, World Heritage Connections
Carly Williams	A/Business Manager
Sean McNamara	Principal Advisor
Alicia Haines	Principal Project Officer
Phoebe Kinley	Team Leader
Audrey Reilly	Senior Project Officer
Angus McLeod	Senior Conservation Officer

Apologies

Peter Evans, Lucy Karger, Angela Siggery, Dr Julia Playford

Agenda item 1.2

Conflict of Interest

Mr Enoch-Tranby declared a conflict as an employee of Jabalbina.

Ms Grant declared a conflict of interest regarding the Return to Country (RtC) project, as an Eastern Kuku Yalanji (EKY) person. During Strategic Item 3.1 related to the RtC project, Ms Grant advised that Dr Driml will act as chair.

Agenda item 2.1

Chair's report

Discussion:

The Chair provided the following updates since the last report:

- Held an Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting in late September to receive a briefing on the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water pilot project reviewing the effectiveness of the management of National Heritage-listed places and their values. This was followed up in October with a meeting with the consultant team, which is scheduled to meet with WTMA in early December.
- Attended the IUCN Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi for the Indigenous Summit and presented on several topics, including linguistics and land tenure. Also presented on Indigenous heritage during the launch of the IUCN Outlook 4 report.
- Participated in the IP Summit on the Boundary Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) across marine areas. This initiative is evolving into a convention in its own right and aims to enhance cooperation and collaboration between conventions on cross-cutting issues.
- Travelled to Panama for Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meetings, including the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, and the first meeting for the new subsidiary body for Article 8J and the presentation of the Modus Operandum Guidelines being prepared to include Indigenous territories as part of the 30 percent of land under the '30 by 30' target. The text was not finalised for the full support of the SBSTTA meeting in time and will go directly to the CBD COP 17 in October 2026.
- Travelled to Canberra with Mr Buchanan and Ms Karger to discuss funding commitments for the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program (YCAEP) and the WTMA Federation Funding Agreement. Met with Senator, the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy regarding the continuation of YCAEP funding. Due to parliamentary commitments, meetings with ministers and staff were challenging. A follow-up meeting with Senator the Hon Murray Watt is planned in Brisbane. The primary message conveyed to advisors was the need for Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustments to WTMA base funding.
- In November, Ms Grant chaired the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC) Cultural Values Working Group and participated in the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee Meeting.

Resolution:

Board **noted** the Chair's update.

Agenda item 2.2

Executive Director's report

Summary:

Mr Buchanan provided an update on key matters since the last Board meeting:

- Update report on the staffing and movements and the need to get an early start on the process of calling for EOIs for the Director Indigenous Identified (male) to begin as the current incumbent's term will expire in May 2026.
- Travelled to Canberra with the Chair, Ms Grant and Ms Karger to advocate for ongoing Commonwealth funding for the YCAEP and additional investment in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. He noted that aerial baiting for yellow crazy ants (YCA) is scheduled to commence next week.
- WTMA will be applying for the Australian Heritage Grant to include work in the economic value of tourism, refining the Wet Tropics brand and supporting key initiatives including the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides The applications will close in early December.
- Reported on the team's work supporting Douglas Shire Council and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to explore options for transitioning away from sugar cane following the closure of the Mossman Mill. He also provided feedback on the first meeting of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides (WTWHG) Steering Committee.
- The Working for Queensland Surveys have been completed, with results showing 86% of respondents believe their work and organisation positively impact the lives of Queenslanders, 62% have positive engagement with WTMA, and 72% acknowledge their autonomy in performing their roles. However, there has been no improvement in previous years' results with several declines. Discussions with staff have commenced, with a focus on addressing work demands, professional development, and recruitment processes.
- Advised that a 'Sprint Team' has been established to deliver on the outcomes of the WTMA Values process and is currently developing a project plan.
- Other topics discussed included WTMA Board Director recruitment processes, further meetings with Ministers regarding funding as outlined in the Chair's report, and the development of grant applications for the current round of Australian Heritage Grants.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml inquired about funding for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides. It was noted that an MOU was signed a few weeks ago, and a Steering Committee meeting has already been held.
- Dr Driml also asked about the status of the Far North Queensland Regional Plan and whether WTMA is involved. Mr Wong confirmed that most of WTMA's requests have been incorporated into the draft plan mapping. Overall, it appears WTMA has achieved positive outcomes through the process. The consultation period for the plan ends on 5 January. Dr Driml further asked about Climate Change input, and it was noted that there is still an opportunity to provide comment. Commendation was given to Ms Julie Colman for her contributions to the work on the Regional Plan.

Resolution:

The Board **noted** the Executive Director's Report.

Actions:

- Committee secretariats to send a link to Regional Plan to Committees so they have the opportunity to comment.

Agenda item 2.3

Previous minutes Board Meeting No. 132

Discussion:

Two changes were requested for Board meeting No, 132 Minutes:

- Dr Driml requested that in relation to item 3.3, that it was noted that it was the Community Consultative Committee that supported the approach to the 2025-26 State of Wet Tropics (SOWT) Report, and
- Ms Neville and Mr McNamara advised that an additional resolution item was requested to be added to Agenda item 3.1, being: '**Agreed** that DCCEEW add an Acknowledgement of Country to the Wet Tropics of Queensland web and database pages for the World and National Heritage listings'.

Resolution:

The Board **approved** Minutes Board Meeting 132.

Agenda item 3.1

Return to Country – Communication planning, next steps, and contingencies (strategy 3)

Summary: The Board was provided with an advocacy communications plan, advising that WTMA with Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation (Jabalbina) jointly advocate for a tangible pathway to housing for Eastern Kuku Yalanji (EKY) People following the conclusion of the EKY Return to Country (RtC) Project. Following the production of a comprehensive and purposeful RtC Plan, the Boards of WTMA and Jabalbina will advocate that the Queensland Government needs to continue to support EKY Peoples to navigate local planning laws, develop lease agreements and organise suitable housing options; including community delivered housing, rent-to-buy schemes and self-funded options. The Boards are asking for a coordinated 'one government' approach to ensure a consistent and effective approach which leads to real housing outcomes on-ground for EKY Peoples.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml requested further clarity on the content of the letter and the associated discussion points.
- Mr Nelson emphasised the complexity of the issue and suggested mapping out next steps, including identifying processes, tracking progress, and developing a timeline. These details could be included in a discussion points paper rather than the letter to the Premier.
- Drafting the letter to the Premier was identified as the immediate next step. The requested actions from the Premier will run alongside ongoing processes, with the timeline and process description serving as a reference for tracking progress.
- Tim advised that WTMA aims to complete the current phase within six months, with an additional three months potentially required using existing funding. The next phase involves transitioning the process to Jabalbina, including discussions on capacity, building approvals, and other steps, which Jabalbina may choose to manage independently. Mr Wong agreed to establish a clear timeline and outline the required steps.
- Mr Nelson queried whether WTMA's role would become hands-off after six months. Mr Wong clarified that WTMA would revert to its statutory functions after completing the funded Community Development Plan (CDP). However, WTMA may still provide advice, and potential issues with non-compliance, such as failure to follow the CDP, could require attention.

- Ms Lively suggested including in the Premier's letter a request to access 'Closing the Gap' funding, which aligns with the RtC Project's objectives of improving housing and health outcomes for Indigenous communities. Of the $108 million allocated for the next year, only $19 million has been accessed, and early engagement could assist with securing funding for infrastructure development.
- Mr Wong proposed preparing and submitting 'shovel-ready' projects to Minister Fiona Simpson MP to advocate for using Closing the Gap funding for the RtC project. This proposal is already part of the communications plan. Additionally, an economist has been commissioned to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the RtC initiative to support specific funding requests.
- Dr Driml noted that the letter to the Premier requires further editing to clearly outline specific barriers and provide a clearer timeline.

Resolution:

The Board:

Endorse advocacy material to support the WTMA and Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation boards to jointly seek Queensland Government commitment to resource implementation, with some editing for clarity, and a timeline to be provided to the Board at the next meeting.

Agenda item 3.2

3.2 Limited visitor infrastructure

Summary: Following the approval of the Section 62 Guideline for Limited and Developed Visitor Infrastructure (Version 1.0) at Board #130 on 17 March 2025, an internal review identified opportunities to improve clarity, consistency, and readability. The revised Version 1.1 incorporates updates to structure, format, and language to align with the WTMA guideline template and the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998. Version 1.1 includes: clearer definitions and examples of Limited Visitor Infrastructure (LVI) and Developed Visitor Infrastructure (DVI); separates Community Services Infrastructure into a dedicated table; clarifies terminology around road access; expands guidance for permit applicants; and emphasises community engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and local communities. These minor amendments do not alter the intent or interpretation of the original guideline. Once approved, the revised guideline will be published on the WTMA website to provide clear and consistent guidance for future application processes.

Discussion:

- Tim provided an overview of the development of the guideline, and the process to align the guidance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* parks guideline under the current revised guideline.
- Mr Grant supported the inclusion of tables to clarify differences between limited and developed visitor infrastructure.
- Dr Driml found the material clearer and asked about the level of assessment and discretion in decision making. Mr Wong explained the guidelines align closely with QPWS&P practices, ensuring consistency in zoning and materials used for developments.
- Mr Nelson asked about the primary stakeholder, and it was clarified that QPWS&P is the largest stakeholder. Mr Buchanan added that permit seekers include private operators and ecotourism initiatives, with most efforts focused on visitor infrastructure within QPWS&P estates.

- Mr Buchanan noted that Zone D sites were historically reserved for tourism development but remained undeveloped. Post-2020, Zones D and C were merged to provide greater flexibility for the tourism industry.
- Mr Nelson asked if aligning with QPWS&P guidelines streamlines processes. Mr Buchanan confirmed this alignment supports streamlining.
- Mr Wong noted that it is sometimes unclear whether QPWS&P or WTMA will handle permitting and emphasised the importance of messaging to operators about simplifying processes while maintaining standards. He clarified that WTMA does not issue commercial activity permits.
- Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez stated that most infrastructure approvals will go through QPWS&P, as tourism now falls under DETSI. She added that additional infrastructure, such as roads, will be needed to support developments, and will also require approvals.
- Mr Buchanan shared that WTMA was the first organisation to permit the Wangetti Trail, but the permit has since lapsed. He assured that WTMA remains responsive to permit applications.

Action:

Section 5 of the guideline requires an edit – under 'Other Legislation' reference to 'Australian Heritage', where should be amended to 'National Heritage'.

Resolution:

The Board:

- ***Noted*** the changes to the approved Section 62 Guideline Limited and Developed Visitor Infrastructure (Version 1.0); and
- ***Approve*** the revised Guideline (Version 1.1), which once approved will be put on the WTMA website.

Agenda item 3.3

Milestone Report

Summary: The Board reviewed the 2025-26 Quarter 1 Annual Business Plan milestone report, which highlighted key achievements and a comprehensive description of delivery progress. The Authority delivers on its obligations through an Annual Business Plan, which aligns and is informed by the Business Strategy 2023-2028, and the Wet Tropics Strategic Plan 2020-2030. Significant Quarter 1 progress has been made across the scope of the Annual Business Plan 2024-25 deliverables.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml asked about prioritising of resources. Mr Buchanan responded that budget impacts that had been previously discussed will impact on the next annual plan in terms of actions that cannot be delivered due to constraints.

Resolution:

The Board

Noted the 2025-26 Quarter 1 Annual Business Plan milestone report.

Agenda item 3.4

Wangetti update

Summary:

Dr Brien provided a presentation on the Wangetti Trail, covering the governance structure, project background, and scope. He outlined the total budget, including expenditure to date and the remaining allocated funds, and discussed the transition to QPWS&P management. Priorities and options for determining the trail alignment north of Wangetti were highlighted, along with updates on proposed community reference groups and based around Palm Cove, Wangetti, and Port Douglas localities. Other priorities include addressing the car park issue in Palm Cove, which has been put on hold pending further assessment of community solutions. Matt also discussed the development and objectives of the Advisory Committee and community reference groups, as well as the key next steps for the project.

Mr Buchanan provided an update on WTMA's involvement and requirements for the Trail. He noted that WTMA was part of the original working group and business case, providing early advice to ensure Traditional Custodians were engaged, which supported the DCCEEW permit processes. WTMA's advice has consistently aimed to support the trail project while ensuring alignment with the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 and enabling public access to the area. Mr Buchanan emphasised that, under the Plan, self-assessment for the project must be consistent with WTMA processes, with WTMA available to provide support and advice. Early engagement with WTMA was recommended to avoid potential complications and ensure smooth progress.

Discussion

- Dr Brien noted that WTMA had been consulted on the designs and alignments for the Wangetti Trail, although not all alignments have been reviewed.
- Mr Nelson inquired about WTMA's role moving forward, highlighting the trail as a significant feature of the WTWHA with long-term engagement. Matt confirmed that QPWS&P, WTMA, and Tourism meet monthly as partners to discuss the project.
- Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez emphasised the importance of providing LVI/DVI guidelines to QPWS&P as part of the self-assessment process. She also highlighted the need to reference the WHA and Tourism in compliance plans and noted WTMA's role in supporting signage.
- Dr Driml stated that Matt's presentation to the CCC was well received, particularly the inclusion of the three consultation groups. She also asked about the budget for maintenance, to which Matt responded that short-term funding is being pursued for maintenance and other costs, such as fire management, with a submission under consideration.
- Mr Wong asked about plans for public campsites at the proposed Dark Jungle site. Dr Brien explained that works are underway to align with the plan, and the proposed alignments and approach will guide discussions with potential operators. Mr Wong stressed the importance of incorporating LVI/DVI guidelines into the expression of interest process. Dr Brien added that local businesses could be involved, and various accommodation options are being explored.
- Mr Buchanan expressed that WTMA need to be more closely engaged in the process and comply with the Wet Tropic Management Plan.
- Ms Grant highlighted the importance of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) with all the Traditional Owners of both groups (EKY and Tjupakai), particularly for the area from Mowbray River to Port Douglas as the decision was still to be decided in the courts. Dr Brien provided an update on ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners and outlined plans for engagement as the project progresses north of the Mowbray.

Action:

- Dr Brien to provide an the most current presentation to WTMA so that it can be shared with the WTMA's Advisory Committee secretariats.

Resolution:

The Board

Noted the update on the Wangetti trail

Agenda item 3.5

National Heritage Values Evaluation Pilot – update from WTMA

Summary:

The Wet Tropics of Queensland is part of an Australian Government pilot project to evaluate the effectiveness of heritage management for places listed on the National Heritage List (NHL). Led by the Heritage Division of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), and supported by Sapere and GML Heritage, the project aims to assess management arrangements, identify challenges and risks, and build capacity for improved heritage management over time. WTMA has nominated Barron Gorge National Park and either Girringun Indigenous Protected Area or Daintree National Park CYPAL as representative sites for the review, recognising the complexity of managing both natural and cultural values. While natural values benefit from World Heritage listing and statutory management, cultural values face challenges due to limited funding and reliance on external resources. Next steps include WTMA's self-assessment, site confirmation, field visits on 1–2 December 2025, and consultation with partners such as QPWS&P, Djabugay Aboriginal Corporations, Terrain NRM, and TTNQ. A draft report will be submitted to DCCEEW before Christmas, with final delivery in February 2026, including a practical framework, summary report, and individual site report.

Discussion included

- Ms Dampney noted that this is being managed by a different branch.
- Ms Grant mentioned that this has also been referred to the IAC and inquired about further communications.

Resolution:

The Board

Noted the update on the DCCEEW National Heritage Values Evaluation Pilot

Agenda item 3.6

National Communications update

Summary: The Corporate Communication Report (2025-26 Q1) provided an overview of key activities, including a social media snapshot, top-performing posts, the Wet Tropics e-newsletter, media releases, and resource requests. The report aligns with the Communications Strategy and supports the evaluation and measurement of outcomes.

Ms Kinley gave a brief update on the five social media channels, highlighting 15.5k followers and a strong recorded reach, which reflects the audience size. She also noted that all posts have been organic, with no paid boosting or promotions.

Discussion:

- Ms Grant commented that the report is great but asked whether the engagement levels are considered good. Ms Kinley acknowledged that while the engagement is positive, there is room for improvement.
- Mr Nelson suggested that the social media channels are an excellent way to drive engagement and proposed using the WHA page to discuss the area and a separate page to focus on WTMA. Ms Kinley noted that a dual brand strategy is currently being developed. Mr Nelson emphasised the value of the existing audience and the opportunity to leverage it to amplify messaging.
- It was noted that the organisation operates in a content-rich environment.
- Efforts are underway to focus on continual improvements.

Resolution:

The Board

Noted the presentation on the Quarterly Communications Strategy Report

Agenda item 4.0 Reports

Agenda item 4.1 Advisory Committee reports to the Board

Community Consultative Committee

Dr Driml provided an update:

- The Community Consultative Committee (CCC) met on 7 November.
- A general briefing was provided on Minister Andrew Powell MP's meeting with the Board at Board meeting No. 132, including issues raised such as the funding situation.
- Advice to the Board suggested that updating the economic value of the WTWHA could strengthen the funding request.
- Recruitment updates noted that recent appointees would be offered three-year terms.
- A briefing on the Wangetti Trail by Dr Matt Brien covered key issues, including the budget available for maintenance, ongoing confusion about trail alignment, mixed messages between announcements and local work, the importance of protecting sensitive areas, and advice to the Board and QPWS&P to support local community reference groups (to be confirmed). The new community engagement officer also attended the meeting.
- Preparations are underway for CCC to provide input into the Climate Action Plan update, following previous meetings with Ms Sophie Barrett regarding the proposed Climate Charter and recent discussions with Ms Bronwyn Opie from CAFNEC. Concerns remain regarding the EPBC Act amendments in terms of the lack of climate trigger, and approvals of fossil fuels projects. There is also a project partnering with Local Government regarding Heat and Hazards project.
- WTWHG promotion opportunities were discussed, with suggestions including engaging with the gifted green program, and Mr Ron Baldwin from Daintree planning to trial the program with school groups.

- Mr Boyd Lenne from Treeforce Cairns informed the committee that free TAFE is no longer available for Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CEM) courses.
- The CCC provided the following advice to the Board:
    - Updating the economic value of the WHA may assist in funding asks
    - To pass on QPWS&P support for the three community reference groups, but that broader relevant groups such as CAFNEC also be included in the consultation

Scientific Advisory Committee

Professor Williams provided an update:

- The nomination of the Highland Forests of the Wet Tropics was unsuccessful. Two options were considered: do nothing and be reconsidered in March 2026, or revise the application, also for the March 2026 process. The decision was made to proceed with revising the application.
- The Threatened Species Committee advised that the nomination was too broad, with some sections containing less rigorous data, which diluted the application. The revised nomination will focus solely on vertebrate fauna, particularly regionally endemic vertebrates, as this section has the strongest supporting information.
- The nomination will be adjusted to focus on uplands (>600m), as this will include the areas that are being impacted most heavily. Information on plant communities will still be included but will focus on habitat relevance.
- The Climate Adaptation Plan review was discussed, including how to best differentiate between the State of the Wet Tropics (SOWT) report and the review itself.
- A presentation was given on single watercourse endemics and the impacts of Cyclone Jasper, with discussions on measures to protect threatened endemics.
- A paper in Nature was discussed regarding forests switching from carbon sinks to carbon sources. Conflicting findings were noted, but it was emphasised that restoration efforts lead to increases in carbon sink capacity.
- SAC highlighted the tension between adaptation and mitigation and recommended that the Board advocate for government action on emissions reduction, given the significant climate change threats to the World Heritage area and its listed attributes.
- It was noted that nominations can be a long process, with a recent listing for Mallee Birds taking six years of revisions to achieve approval.
- There is serious concerns that the WTWHA was in a critical condition and that the very values that made it a WHA is now those values that are deterioration of the WHA's Outstanding Universal Values.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml asked if the Board could use 'Climate change in the Wet Tropics: a 10-point plan: A statement from the Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority regarding serious climate change impacts on the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area' to guide its advocacy efforts. Mr Wong responded that this had been previously raised with the SAC, noting that WTMA's primary focus is on adaptation. He emphasised the importance of communicating the need for society-wide emissions reductions as part of the broader message.
- As an additional point of advocacy, Mr Wong highlighted that the SAC is advising the Board to recommend that a majority of the WTWHA be listed as threatened under the EPBC Act through the highlands nomination process. While mitigation is the most impactful action required, management agencies on the ground are largely limited to adaptation efforts, apart from advocacy. He stressed the importance of addressing both mitigation and adaptation.

- Dr Driml suggested that the need for emissions reduction should be a key message at the forefront of the WTMA Climate Adaptation Plan review.

Joint WTMA-Terrain Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC)

Ms Grant provided an update on the IAC's recent meeting and other discussions, including:

- The National Heritage Values Management Planning Pilot was discussed.
- A meeting was held on Monday, 11 November, to reinforce the purpose of the IAC and to seek their advice and input on various matters. It was noted that the IAC is most effective when providing early advice and guidance on themes and processes. Terrain NRM highlighted their focus on partnerships and sought advice on partner projects.
- The Terms of Reference (TOR) will be revised, with the updated version to be submitted to the secretariat by the end of January for discussion at the March meeting.
- The date for the next meeting is to be confirmed.

Resolution:

The Board **noted** reports from CCC, SAC and IAC.

Agenda item 4.2 Director's matters

Dr S. Driml provided a presentation on the economic values of the WH. A summary of this includes:

The State of the Wet Tropics Report 2014-15 estimated the tourism value of the Wet Tropics at $2.6 billion (based on a 2008 report) in direct and indirect output and household income, supporting 13,351 jobs. Non-market natural and ecosystem services were valued at an additional $2.6 billion, bringing the total estimated value to $5.2 billion. In 2024 dollars this total becomes $7.8 billion.

For the year ending December 2024, the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region recorded 2.7 million overnight visitors, contributing $4.3 billion in spending, 15% of the region's Gross Regional Product (GRP), and supporting 29,300 jobs (1 in 6 jobs). In the Townsville region, 1.4 million overnight visitors contributed $1.1 billion in spending, 5% of the region's GRP, and supported 8,900 jobs (1 in 17 jobs). In 2018, 22% of international visitors and 10% of domestic visitors to the Townsville region visited a state or national park.

The *At What Cost? Safeguarding the Great Barrier Reef's Role in Australia's Economy* report by Deloitte Access Economics and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (2025) assumed that all leisure visitors to the six NRM regions adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) are considered GBR visitors, totalling 16 million visitors in 2023-24. However, actual visitors to the GBR, as measured by the Environmental Management Charge (EMC), were 2 million. Tourism accounts for 89% of the market value of reef uses, with the modelled economic value reflecting value added rather than direct expenditure.

Discussion:

- Mr Nelson expressed concerns that the Deloitte assumptions and figures may be unrealistic.
- Mr Nelson suggested conducting an economic analysis for the Wet Tropics but cautioned that replicating the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) approach could result in challengeable figures, including double counting. However, pursuing a more accurate methodology might reduce the overall impact of the findings.

- Mr Nelson emphasised the significant impact of the Wet Tropics on First Nations peoples and suggested that WTMA should align its messaging to highlight this, as it could support funding efforts. He noted that the Wet Tropics has a high density of First Nations stories, potentially second only to Uluru. He further recommended obtaining more accurate data, including the economic impact ($ value) for First Nations peoples.
- Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez proposed developing a methodology in collaboration with Tourism Research Australia (TRA) that could be updated annually. This would provide a consistent measure each year and align with TTNQ's approach

Ms A. Lively provided the following update with discussion:

- Updates were provided on Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Think Tank (RAPTT) meetings and progress since the last Board meeting, including securing funding for the 2026 summit for RAP to review the independent assessment of the Regional Agreement. RAPTT has gone to tender for an events coordinator, and planning for dates will commence once the coordinator is in place.
- RAPTT is exploring the creation of a peak body at the bioregional scale, and work is underway to transition RAPTT activities to the new entity. Discussions about this model will take place at the summit.
- It was noted that RAPTT's work originated from the Regional Forum and is currently being undertaken on a voluntary basis.
- Invitations have been sent for a RAPTT meeting with partners on 5 December. Following the summit and Regional Forum, there may be an opportunity to initiate a project to refresh the Regional Agreement.
- It was also noted that many AGMs are currently taking place, which may result in changes to contacts within various organisations.
- Ailsa is participating in RAPTT as a Rainforest Aboriginal Person, not as a WTMA representative.

Mr M. Nelson provided the following update with discussion:

- Mr Nelson provided a short presentation and discussion around three main topics: Highline stats, Messaging, Story Telling. Key points outlined in the slide include:
    - Highline Stats - the Wet Tropics attracts many visitors annually, generating significant economic value and supporting numerous tourism operators. Greater emphasis on First Nations involvement is needed, including data on First Nations-owned businesses, employment, and cultural experiences, to highlight the region's unique cultural and economic contributions.
    - Messaging - the term "Wet Tropics" is underused, with the Daintree often taking precedence. An operator toolkit with accurate selling points, consistent branding, and resources like video, imagery, and social media content is proposed. A promotional piece and a regular operator newsletter could further strengthen messaging and industry alignment.
    - Storytelling - with over 10,000 social media followers, there is untapped potential to better showcase the Wet Tropics' unique qualities. Current content could be more engaging and visually impactful, with a shift towards consumer-focused storytelling to highlight the region's beauty and experiences.
- Mr Nelson offered to assist WTMA in generating content and developing the supporting mechanics.
- He noted that having this framework in place would facilitate discussions with politicians regarding funding needs.
- Mr Nelson expressed gratitude for the opportunity to represent WTMA at the Tourism Awards and to inform the industry about the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Mr Buchanan thanked Michael for representing WTMA at the Tourism Awards and highlighted that the one-pager slide presented aligned with current ideas for the AHG.

- Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez noted existing alignments, including the dual branding strategy and the Wet Tropics toolkit.

Resolution:

The Board **noted** the Director's report

4.3 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) Report

Summary: The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) launched its First Nations Climate Action webpage and opened Round 8 of the Australian Heritage Grants program, closing 5 December 2025. The IUCN's latest World Heritage Outlook Report identified climate change as the greatest threat to global World Heritage sites, with the Wet Tropics of Queensland assessed as being of 'Significant Concern' and the Great Barrier Reef's outlook remaining 'critical.' The International Heritage Team provided updates on UNESCO's Climate Action Policy and Toolkit, while the World Heritage Centre acknowledged Australia's contributions to Indigenous engagement and capacity-building initiatives. The Australian Heritage Council visited the Gondwana Rainforests to observe recovery efforts and will meet again in December.

Ms Nuridin additionally highlights and expanded on the provided report:

- The Director of the World Heritage Centre, Lazare Eloundou Assomo, has written back to DCCEEW, welcoming an offer to support in relation to the committee decision 47 COM 11, requesting that the World Heritage Centre (WHC), Advisory Bodies, and state parties work to incorporate Indigenous values, including their recognition in the property's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV), and enhance participation under the Convention.
- The next COP (31) will be hosted by Türkiye, with Australia presiding over the negotiations.
- It was noted that an Acknowledgement of Country is now currently included on the Departmental website, and the Australian Heritage Database for the Wet Tropics Listing —the first site to have the Acknowledgement of Country added.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml noted that the World Heritage Outlook Report for October 2025 assessed the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) as being of 'Significant Concern,' with concerns raised regarding the level of funding. She inquired whether the federal Minister had been briefed on the IUCN Outlook Reports, to which it was confirmed that they had.
- Ms Dampney confirmed that the Minister is aware of the funding and resourcing issues.
- Mr Buchanan sought further clarification is the statement in the 2025 Outlook Report: 'Investment is not commensurate with the challenges', and has this been passed on to the Minister. Ms Dampney advised that this is the case, and that the Minister is becoming more aware of connections within this portfolio.

Resolution:

The Board **noted** the DCCEEW Report.

Agenda item 4.4 Queensland Department reports

(Noting there was no verbal report from OGBR due to conflicting commitments. A written report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting)

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships

Summary: The QPWS&P report provided to the Board included a detailed overview of QPWS&P actions related to the Wet Tropics WHA including, human resources and recruitment, the Values Based Management Framework (VBMF) roadmap, the pest program (pigs, cattle, weeds), research and monitoring, threatened species, the fire program, First Nations engagement and collaboration, and the capital works program. Ms Beckitt additionally advised that the Jindalba Boardwalk had now opened on November 11 with a media release by the Minister. The EKY Tourism and Cultural hub was also visited, with anticipated completion in mid-December, with a soft opening.

Discussion:

The Board noted QPWS&P's report. Ms Beckitt provided a summary and some further updates including:

- Dr Driml expressed her appreciation that the Jindalba Boardwalk is now open.
- Mr Buchanan advised that Jabalbina may receive the keys to the Tourism and Cultural Centre before Christmas. Ms Beckitt noted that this is an exciting project with significant opportunities for First Nations engagement and connection to the area.
- Ms Grant mentioned that she had also worked with the project team and is looking forward to the centre's opening.
- Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez thanked Ms Beckitt for the report and requested feedback on its format. Ms Beckitt welcomed feedback, and Dr Driml commented that the report was detailed, enjoyable to read, and provided valuable information.

Resolution:

- Board **noted** the State Government reports, noting there was no report from DETSI Tourism

Agenda item 5.0 Actions arising, and significant correspondence

Agenda item 5.1 Actions arising Board Meeting 132

Agenda Item	Actions arising from Meeting #133 and previous	Comments
#132 Agenda item 5.1 Actions arising	Mr McNamara to provide the SOWT comms strategy to Dr Driml when finalised	Not completed - superseded. The draft plan has become a working document. The plan will be finalised in preparation for the release of the documents. CCC to be provided with Comms materials, and receive feedback.
#132 Agenda item 3.6 World Heritage Stewardship – Post Cyclone Jasper Disaster Funding Arrangements	Dr Palma agreed to follow up and make further enquiries regarding researcher engagement in sensitive areas of Cooper Creek, and report back.	Completed. Email sent to Chair on 30 September 2025
#132 Agenda item 3.3 WTMA State of Wet Tropics 2025-26 Tropic (Strategy 6)	The Authority to develop the project plan including key dates for Board and Committee consideration.	Ongoing – to be developed as part of review process and presented in February/March 2026. Project plan will be prepared prior to Christmas

#132 Agenda item 3.2 Return to Country Update on Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country project (Strategy 2)	Project team to provide a communications plan / next steps to seek resourcing and support, and contingency plans.	Partially Completed – Board 133 Agenda item 3.1 – contingency plan still in development
#132 Agenda item 4.4 DETSI Tourism	Invitation to be extended to QPWS to present on Wangetti at the next Board meeting.	Completed – Board 133 Agenda item 3.4
#133 Agenda item 2.2 Executive Director's Report	Updated LVI/DVI guideline to be provided to Board out of session.	Completed – Board Paper 3.2 (in session)
#131 Agenda item 3.4 Outcomes from the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum (Strategy 2)	Ms Haines to send Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Forum Outcomes Report to Board for information and share with IAC, CCC and SAC.	Underway – report is being reviewed. Saskia to follow up on progress
#131 Agenda item 4.1 Advisory Committee reports to the Board	WTMA to a) consider the three-year term for CCC members suggestion from the Board. b) consider self-assessment for Advisory Committees like Board-self assessment.	a) Underway – recruitment to be undertaken early in 2026 b) Underway / complete. Has been used for CCC meeting.
#131 Agenda item 4.4 Queensland Department reports Tourism (DETSI)	WTMA and DETSI to touch base regarding suggestions to improve community engagement	Complete - Cairns based public consultation for Wangetti has been set up by DETSI
#130 Agenda item 6.1- Other Business	WTMA (Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez) to create a forward engagement calendar of events to be discussed so that WTMA Board Directors can attend and be advocates, and for the committees as well, aligned with Comms Strategy.	Ongoing – Board engagement added to WTMA SharePoint calendar.

Resolution

- The Board **noted** the Action Arising

Agenda item 5.2 Significant correspondence

List and copies of correspondence distributed prior to meeting.

Date	To/From	Description	Action for Directors
30/10/2025	From WTMA Executive Director to Dr Andrew Dennis Terrain	Letter of Support – Critical Frogs: Recovering Wet Tropic's most threatened mountain frogs from the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Jasper	Note
23/10/2025	From WTMA Executive Director to Ms Kerr, Cassowary Coast Regional Council	Wet Tropics Management Authority feedback on the CCRC Local Law review	Note
29/09/2025	From WTMA Executive Director to Mr Scott Osman, CEO, Douglas Shire Council	Letter of Support – Rainforest Rescue Development Application for Permanent Plantation	Note
26/09/2025	From WTMA Executive Director and Mr Joshua Paterson, CEO, Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation to Mayor Scomazzon, Douglas Shire Council	Regarding Meeting Outcome – Eastern Kuku Yalanji (EKY) Return to Country Project presentation to Douglas Shire Council	Note
19/09/2025	From WTMA Executive Director to Grants Administration Team, DETSI	Letter of support for Kuranda Conservation Community Nursery's Engaging Science Grant application	Note
19/09/2025	From WTMA Executive Director to Grant Administration Team, DETSI	Letter of support for Tamara and Bruce Scenna's Engaging Science Grant application	Note

Date	To/From	Description	Action for Directors
01/10/2025	From WTMA Chair to Whom it may concern	Letter of Support for Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation Representative Native Title Body Corporate – 2025-26 Funding Round – Skilling Queenslanders for Work	Note
25/09/2025	From WTMA Chair to Mr Graham Bolton, Director-General, Qld DPI	National Electric Ant Eradication Program / Concerns regarding the threat of electric ants in the Kuranda region.	Note

Resolution:

The Board **noted** the significant correspondence report.

Agenda item 6.0 Other Business

Agenda item 6.1 Other Business

The Board revised the date for Board 134, selecting 16 and 17 March 2026. This meeting was proposed to be held in Townsville to meet with Townsville City Council, Townsville Enterprise, Traditional Owners, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). This is proposed to be a two-day meeting / field visit, with a potential trip to Paluma. Dr Driml commented that a meeting with GBRMPA would be very useful. Ms Grant also supported the proposal, and thought it would be great to visit Rainforest Aboriginal Communities in the Townsville Area.

Agenda item 6.2 Board self-assessment

The Board, as part of its best practice governance approach has implemented a standing agenda item to conduct a reflection and evaluation on the effectiveness of the Board meetings. Their objective is to continuously improve the performance of the Board and maintain their focus on strategic matters that drive performance and support the Authority in meeting its legislative obligations. Any actions will form part of the actions arising from the minutes. The self-assessment link was provided to Directors.

Communique

Ms Kinley worked on the draft communique through the Board meeting, with the final draft provided to Directors for approval after the meeting.

Meeting closed 4.00pm.