

Board Meeting No. 130

Monday 17 March 2025

FINAL Minutes

Wet Tropics Management Authority

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

Agenda item 1.1

Chair's welcome and introduction, and apologies

Discussion:

The Chair provided an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed all attendees.

In Attendance:

Board Directors	
Ms Chrissy Grant	Chair
Dr Sally Driml	Director
Ms Ailsa Lively	Director
Mr. Willie Enoch-Tranby	Director
Ms Sylvie Garner	A/Executive Director
Partner Agencies	
Dr Matt Brien	Regional Director, Northern Region, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnership, (DETSI)
Ms Clare Fealy	Senior Heritage and Policy Officer, First Nations Heritage Section, World and National Heritage Branch, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
Ms Erin Dampney	Director, First Nations Heritage Section, DCCEEW
Mr. Steven Silvester	General Manager - Tourism Industry Development, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science, and Innovation (DETSI)
Ms Julia Playford	Executive Director, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, DETSI
Ms Angela Siggery	Director, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, and World Heritage Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs, DETSI
Ms Carla Wilson	Manager, World Heritage Unit, Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs, DETSI
WTMA Staff	
Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez	Manager, World Heritage Connections
Ms Lucy Karger	Project Manager, Yellow Crazy Ants Eradication Program
Mr. Tim Wong	Manager, Planning and Conservation
Ms Vanessa Losada	A/Principal Advisor (Minutes)
Mr Gareth Humphreys	Team Leader Technical Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication
Others	
Gary Morton	Biosecurity Queensland
Prof. Steven Williams	Chair of Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

Apologies were received from:

Ms Julia Playford, DETSI	Prof. Steven Williams, Chair of SAC	Ms Lucy Karger, WTMA
Ms Angela Siggery, DETSI	Mr Steven Silvester, DETSI	

Agenda item 1.2

Conflict of Interest

None reported.

Agenda item 2.1

Chair's report

Discussion:

Chair provided the following updates since the last report:

- Two members terms expired. Only four voting members in the WTMA Board. EOI advertised during 2 weeks in January 2025. Selection report completed with recommended nominees sent to the Minister for consideration. Cabinet and Governor in Council processes to follow.
- Attended the Wonderkarma workshop to develop the Communications Strategy
- Attended Destination 2045 deep dive on Tourism and meeting with Minister who raised Wangetti as a destination.
- Meetings with Members of Parliament to support funding, provided background information about WTMA.
- Executive Director (ED) WTMA position advertised, and interviews held to appoint A/ ED Sylvie Garner.

Resolution:

Board **noted** Chair's update.

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 2.2

Executive Director's report

Summary:

- WTMA's ED reported new hires for field roles in YCA.
- Budget bid for YCA progressing and awaiting results in May/June Budget.
- 728.5 hectares eradicated, largest area in the world to have eradicated an invasive ant species. Four new detections in Goldsborough with a Community Forum held on 26th February.
- WTMA participated in DETSI 20 Year Tourism Plan – Destination 2045 consultation and provided a submission- Government commitments identified as Paluma to Wallaman and Wangetti trails.
- Regional Forum to be held on 9 – 12 June in Port Douglas- invitations sent out last week. Align with NAIDOC week theme: "The next generations, strength, vision and legacy". Supported by QPWS&P and Terrain NRM.
- Reef Assist 2.0 Project commenced and will continue until December 2025. Four out of five staff recruited.
- WTMA Restoration program- meeting with CleanCo to discuss opportunities for conservation and restoration. Procurement underway to support that work.
- WTMA and Jabalbina are jointly preparing a large grant application under round 3 Disaster Recovery funding arrangements, to assist finding homes for community displaced by flooding in Wujal Wujal.
- Nomination process underway for highland rainforests as a threatened ecological community under the EPBC Act.
- WTMA permitting team- supporting emergency works for recovery in flood affected areas. Joint assessments will be undertaken in March.

- Wonderkarma Communications strategy- WTMA received advice that the company went into liquidation. WTMA aim to finalise the strategy by 21 March.

Resolution:

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

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 2.3

Previous minutes Board Meeting No. 129

Discussion:

No further comments received.

Resolution:

The Board **approved** Minutes Board Meeting 129.

Actions:

Ms Losada to finalise and publish in the WTMA internet.

Agenda item 3.1

Visitor Infrastructure in the Wet Tropics- LVI and DVI thresholds related to QPWS policy and design (Strategy 5)

Summary: This draft guideline provides further information that must be considered by the Authority in permit applications for limited and developed visitor infrastructure. The draft guideline has been previously considered by the Board (#127) and has undergone extensive consultation and subsequent revision. The draft guideline is presented for approval by the Board.

Discussion:

On 7 March, a Board information session was held, where WTMA went over the draft guideline. WTMA Board Directors suggested changes at that meeting. Paper was amended and distributed, then approved by the WTMA Board Out of Session.

Resolution:

The Board, out of session:

- **Approved** the draft Section 62 Guideline Limited and Developed Visitor Infrastructure

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 3.2

Proposed WTWHPM Act Amendments

Summary: Following the change of government, the Wet Tropics Board endorses a refreshed set of proposed amendments to the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*. The amendments will be placed before the Minister for permission to progress. The proposal aims to update compliance and enforcement provisions, to raise penalty units for prohibited practices, and to adjust other administrative components of the Act to streamline processes and improve application.

Discussion:

The Minister will be briefed at a deep dive scheduled for 7 April 2025.

Resolution:

The Board, out of session:

- **Endorsed** the revised set of proposed amendments (Attachment 3.2.1) to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993.
- **Noted** that the detail of the proposed changes, and any changes required by the Minister, will be returned to the board once the research and development of certain provisions is completed.

Agenda item 3.3

WTMA 2024-25 Quarter 2 Milestone and End of Year Report, and Quarter 2 Budget Report

Summary: The Board paper requests that the Board note the 2024-25 Quarter 2 Annual Business Plan milestone and end of year reports, and the Quarter 2 Budget Report. 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. The paper provides a summary of delivery highlights, with more comprehensive description of delivery and budget provided in the attachments. Quarter 2, end of year and budget progress has been made across the scope of the Annual Business Plan 2024-25 deliverables.

Discussion:

Board considered and approved Out of Session.

Resolution:

The Board, out of session:

- **Approved** the 2024-25 Quarter 2 and End of Year Annual Business Plan Milestone reports.
- **Approved** the 2024-25 Q2 Budget Report**.**

Actions:

Ms Losada to send reports to DCCEEW to fulfill Federation Funding Agreement requirements.

Agenda item 3.4

Draft Annual Business Plan 2025-26, Business Strategy and Budget 2025-26

Summary: The Board was asked to approve the Wet Tropics Management Authority Annual Business Plan 2025-26 and minor amendments to the Five-year Business Strategy (2023-2028). These important documents outline the strategies, priority actions, and supporting actions that will be undertaken during the 2025-2026 year to manage the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The documents informed performance reporting to the Queensland and Australian governments and ensure the effective management, protection and presentation of the Area while ensuring Rainforest Aboriginal traditions and culture are incorporated into World Heritage management.

Discussion:

Board considered and approved Out of Session.

Resolution:

The Board, out of session:

- **Approved** the 2025-26 Annual Business Plan, including the proposed distribution of Commonwealth funds to relevant strategies.
- **Approved** minor amendments to the five-year Business Strategy 2023-2028.

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 3.5

Update on Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country project

Presentation for noting A. Reilly

Summary:

Return to Country project will deliver a Community Development Plan (CDP) for Eastern Kuku Yalanji (EKY) People to return to Aboriginal freehold lands. Much of the Aboriginal freehold land belonging to Eastern Kuku Yalanji People is located within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (92%) which is recognised internationally for its Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs). The project is delivered through a collaborative partnership agreement between the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) and the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (Jabalbina) and funded by the Queensland Government.

The project aims to produce a CDP that:

- provides a clear and practical road map for EKY community members to return to live on, work on and care for Country,
- sets out internal governance procedures to enable native title holders to be legally granted leases for exclusive use of trustee lands,
- delivers planning solutions that contribute to achieving EKY Return to Country aspirations and meet the primary goal of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and
- informs the creation of use, development and local plan codes for Local Government Planning Schemes.

Discussion:

Ms Audrey Reilly presented to the Board the project known as “Bama back on Bubu” which means EKY people getting back on country.

Ms Reilly and Mr Ian Holloway presented a spatial tool which includes many data layers from State, Federal and local government, and also EKY cultural and environmental data, which identifies suitable locations for return to country activities.

The project sets a pathway to find balance between development, environmental protection, conservation and community safety. The scope extends to lands outside of WTWHA to have continuity of all EKY lands.

Ms Reilly explained that fast tracking of applications is possible where all assessment criteria are met. Permanent housing opportunities identified so far, are outside the WTWHA.

Board member Ms Ailsa Lively congratulated the Bama on Bubu team for their great work including working with the community, and mentioned that the pathway will be very useful, as it is a very complex legislative and legal context.

Ms Chrissy Grant, Board Chair mentioned that aspirations include a burial ground On Country. Ms Reilly discussed that an Aboriginal Land Act guideline exists and is applied on individual and ad hoc basis. However, there are no

specific requirements that align with authorisations for cemeteries within WTWHA. The proposal is for a special area for a community to bury their people with minimal infrastructure, whilst meeting environmental and other requirements.

Resolution:

Board **noted** the update on Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country Project provided by Ms Reilly and Mr Holloway.

Actions:

Ms Chrissy Grant to touch base with Ms Audrey Reilly in relation to burial/ cemetery sites.

Agenda item 4.0 Reports

Agenda item 4.1 Biosecurity Queensland National Electric Ant Eradication Program

Presentation for noting G. Morton

Discussion:

Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) presented to the Board. BQ is managing an Electric Ant (EA) eradication program targeting an invasive species originating from South and Central America, now also in Australia and Europe, first detected in Australia in Smithfield in 2006.

EAs are tiny, ginger-coloured ants with painful stings and are often confused with local species. They lack visible nests and thrive in human-modified environments, particularly in damp areas like pot plants. Their presence in Far North Queensland threatens biodiversity, wildlife, and agriculture.

Biosecurity measures require sightings to be reported within 24 hours, with restrictions in place for identified restricted zones, which can be checked using an interactive map.

Collaborative efforts are in place with YCA for a new online mapping tool and with local groups for community surveillance, which has led to the identification of new infestations.

Public engagement includes reports, events, and media campaigns. The NEAEP provides free yard checks, which account for a significant portion of detections.

Funding is split 50/50 between the Commonwealth and state/territory governments for the NEAEP. EAs are classified as Class 1 Pests under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Since their detection, 229 infestations have been found, with 143 successfully eradicated. Funding has been approved until June 2029 to pursue eradication, which is seen as cost-effective.

The spread of EAs is mainly due to human movement, with a slower natural spread, indicating the importance of diligent biosecurity measures to prevent further infestation, particularly in areas like the Daintree within the WTWHA.

Board **notes** the report.

Actions:

Board to consider the information from Biosecurity Queensland.

Agenda item 4.2 Advisory Committee reports to the Board

Verbal update for noting.

Community Consultative Committee

Discussion:

Dr Driml updated the Board and advised the following points:

- EOI process to appoint 8 new members to CCC in progress for a mid-term appointment until next year.
- New members will be published on the WTMA site.

Actions:

WTMA to send letters to applicants.

Scientific Advisory Committee

Discussion:

Tim Wong provided the following updates:

- A joint committee meeting among CCC, SAC, and IAC was held on 10 February 2025. The agenda included reviewing current and future State of the Wet Tropics reports, assessing the post-Jasper environmental recovery, and evaluating the Biodiversity Stewardship package.
- Under the priority places project, WTMA, the SAC and partners are nominating highland rainforests above 800 meters altitude (roughly 70,000 hectares in extent) for EPBC listing due to their ecological significance, high level of species endemism, and vulnerability to climate change.
- Discussions were held at an expert workshop on 13 March 2025 to inform this nomination. The workshop discussed key actions to help wildlife and plants in these highland areas adapt to climate change. Potential interventions like species translocation, installation of nesting boxes with designs to prevent overheating, and artificial watering systems (including sprinkler usage and helicopter water drops) were considered to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat waves.
- The expert workshop and joint committee meeting underscored the vital role of collaboration with partners such as DCCEEW and QPWS&P in these initiatives. The ideas from the small expert workshop will be discussed at a larger workshop in June 2025.

Actions:

Nil

Joint WTMA-Terrain Indigenous Advisory Committee

Discussion:

Chair advised the following:

- Draft document distributed to look at what resources are available across different levels of legislation. Please provide comments if you can.
- FN engagements for the highlands rainforests nomination.
- RAPPT meeting last week- catch-up in next IAC meeting.

Actions:

Nil

Resolution:

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

Agenda item 4.3 Director's matters

Verbal update for noting.

S. Driml

Dr Driml provided the following update:

- Qld Gov Destination 2045 Tourism Plan- attended a deep dive on Ecotourism held in Brisbane with Minister and high-level representatives like Ecotourism Australia and TTNQ. Discussion focused on large scale – reminded them to also focus on small scale and investment for infrastructure maintenance.
- Acknowledged Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez and Ms Tamara Siemionow for putting submission together- including conservation stories and first nations involvement, which were not covered in Discussion paper, pointed to plans already in place and WT Guides program. Also, leveraging World Heritage branding- as Qld has the greatest number of World Heritage sites in Australia.

A. Lively

Ms Lively provided the following update:

- Have attended RAPPT meetings- review of regional agreement, last Friday a RAPPT workshop to go over the report of the consultant who undertook review of Agreement

W. Enoch-Tranby

Mr. Enoch-Tranby provided the following update:

- 21 January- regional consultation workshop- focused on ecotourism and adventure tourism but no focus on Indigenous tourism.
- Worked with Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez and Dr Sally Driml on CCC panel to recruit members
- IAC, CCC and SAC - Joint meeting attendance, important networks established.
- Joined QTIC- first nations tourism in Qld. Only Indigenous group that has an Indigenous Tourism plan.

Resolution:

The Board **notes** reports from WTMA Directors.

Agenda item 4.4 DCCEEW report

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

Summary: Ranga Parimala became Branch Head of World and National Heritage at the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in December 2024. DCCEEW submitted State of Conservation reports for the Gondwana Rainforests and Greater Blue Mountains and included the Australian Cornish Mining Sites and Victorian Goldfields in the World Heritage Tentative List. The Preliminary Assessment process for the Parramatta Female Factory was Australia's first participation, with responses sent to ICOMOS. The IUCN will start sending site assessments for the 2025 Outlook report, to be finalised at the Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi. An upcoming workshop focuses on Indigenous participation in World Heritage processes. At the 47th World Heritage Committee meeting, Australia will review reports and propose changes for World Heritage properties. The National Heritage Finalised Priority Assessment List added two sites for the AHC to assess, which visited Budj Bim to learn about ancient First Nations aquaculture. The AHC's next meeting includes site visits to the Elizabeth Farm precinct.

Discussion:

The report was taken as read.

Ms Fealy provided the following further updates:

- The UNESCO WH Committee meeting will be held in Paris.
- IUCN reporting- end of March for fact checking.
- Australian Cornish Mining Sites added to tentative list.
- Indigenous delegate- DCCEEW will provide more info on this.

Resolution

Board **noted** DCCEEW update, report was included in the agenda paper.

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 4.4 Queensland Department reports

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships

Summary: The QPWS&P report covered the period from December 2024 to February 2025, highlighting the impact of the 2025 NQ flood event with over 30 parks affected and ongoing recovery works. Key advancements include the Values Based Management Framework roadmaps for national parks, with some awaiting First Nations peoples' approval. The report details the expansion of conservation estates with specified areas integrated into various national parks. It also outlines the planning of prescribed burns and fire management strategies, alongside First Nations engagement in fire management events. Pest control funding has been secured, with a focus on strategic management programs and collaborative efforts for feral cat monitoring.

Discussion:

The Board noted QPWS&P's report and was taken as read. Mr Brien provided a summary, QPWS&P has:

- Responded to flooding in Ingham and Cardwell- 30 parks closed due to flooding, bases, landslips- full recovery mode and sending teams to help with TC Alfred recovery too.
- Provided input into planning workshops including for Girramay.
- Fire program – met early season burns and targets for the year in terms of area.
- First nations engagement- Cairns and Undara- May 2025 meetings
- Pest management- funding for areas affected by TC Jasper and flooding.
- Increased protected area a few thousand hectares in Curtain Fig, Girramay, Yeppoon parks.

Actions:

Nil

Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage (DETSI)

Summary: The Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage provided updates on the reviews of World Heritage Advisory Committees, efforts to develop culturally appropriate signage, and engagement with stakeholders for various World Heritage Areas in Queensland. It covers the Great Barrier Reef's status post 'in-danger' decision, progress on commitments and response to bleaching events, alongside climate adaptation strategies being implemented. Key updates include the naming of K'gari, collaborations for future management, and auditing of Riversleigh's fossils. It also discusses impacts of climate change with coral cover reductions and scheduled stakeholder workshops aimed at ongoing conservation and tourism initiatives.

Discussion:

The report was taken as read.

Actions:

Nil

Tourism (DETSI)

Verbal update for noting S. Silvester

Discussion:

Mr Silvester was an apology.

Resolution

Board **noted** the State Government reports (DETSI).

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 5.0 Actions arising, and significant correspondence

Agenda item 5.1 Actions arising Board Meeting 129

Discussion:

The action table was discussed.

DCCEEW action from Meeting 129: Only reporting on properties with natural values- holistic viewpoint including cultural values but not cultural landscape. Renomination process is needed to include Indigenous values.

IUCN- interested in stories from Indigenous people on WH properties.

If Board is interested in process for Green Listing- PPIT QPWS&P can provide a presentation and how it aligns with VBMF planning process used by QPWS&P.

A large boundary modification is considered a renomination process.

Addition to Indigenous values to the property- DCCEEW need a workshop on this. New criteria would be considered a renomination, but can informally add language and statements and Indigenous values on Management Plan, but making WTWHA a cultural landscape would be a renomination. Could be discussed in the Regional Forum or added to next Board meeting face to face. Close to WH Committee meeting so DCCEEW may not be able to make it.

Actions:

Nil

Agenda item 5.2 Significant correspondence

List and copies of correspondence distributed prior to meeting.

Date	To/From	Description	Action for Directors
23/10/2024	From Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Committee to Executive Director	Email requesting explanation of offsets process to compensate for World Heritage land used for the Wangetti Trail development.	Note ED's response
20/11/2024	From Office of the Information Commissioner to Executive Director	Email requesting survey completion to understand training needs of stakeholders in relation to information access and privacy rights and responsibilities.	Note ED completed survey
21/02/2025	From WTMA Senior Project Officer to Abriculture	Letter of Support for Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Elders Aboriginal Corporation's First Nations Heritage Grants Round 2 Application.	Note
24/02/2025	From Kuranda Envirocare to WTMA Board Directors	Letter for the Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority to express Kuranda Envirocare's increasing concern with the spread of electric ants in the World Heritage Area and to urge the Board to take greater action, informed by the information offered in this correspondence, to protect the World Heritage values of the Wet Tropics	Consider

Discussion:

Correspondence tabled for noting.

Kuranda Envirocare letter needs a response in relation to new funding received by Biosecurity Queensland (BQ). Include how YCA are working together with BQ on their efforts for eradication.

Resolution:

The Board noted significant correspondence.

Actions:

WTMA/ YCA (Ms Lucy Karger) to advise and prepare a response for Kuranda Envirocare for WTMA Out of session approval.

Agenda item 6.0 Other Business

Agenda item 6.1 Other Business

Discussion:

Face to face meeting in June topics to be discussed out of session.

Actions:

Ms Losada to organise remuneration forms to be sent to the Board.
Ms Losada to organise costings for face-to-face meetings/ stays / accommodation.
Ms Losada to organise with Ms Chrissy Grant, agenda topics for June and September meetings.
Ms Salmeron-Rodriguez, for next Board meeting- 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.

Agenda item 6.2 Board self-assessment

Discussion:

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.

Looking for input from partners to improve WTMA Board meetings. Seeking participation and greater engagement.

Actions:

Ms Losada to send a new assessment survey for Board partners.

WTMA Board members to complete survey out of session.

Agenda item 6.3 Board communique

Discussion:

Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez worked on draft communique.

Actions:

Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez to provide a Draft Communique on Wednesday 19/03/2025.
Board members to approve Draft Communique as soon as possible, by Friday.

Meeting closed 12:00pm.