

Board Meeting No. 132

30 September 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

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 Natassia Wheeler	Director
Mr Michael Nelson	Director
Mr Scott Buchanan	Executive Director (Non-voting Director)

Partners:

Ms Erin Dampney	Director, First Nations Heritage Section, DCCEEW
Ms Marella Umback	Assistant Director, First Nations Heritage Section, DCCEEW
Dr Julia Playford	Executive Director, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, DETSI
Ms Renee Beckitt	A/Regional Director Northern Region, QPWS&P
Mr Darcy Slattery	General Manager – Policy Industry and Partnerships, Tourism, DETSI
Prof. Steve Williams	Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee
Mr Joshua Paterson	Chief Executive Officer Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

WTMA Staff:

Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez	Manager, World Heritage Connections
Mr Tim Wong	Manager, Planning and Conservations
Dr Sean McNamara	Principal Advisor
Ms Alicia Haines	Principal Project Officer
Dr Ana Palma	Senior Conservation Officer
Ms Ellen Weber	Senior Scientist
Mr Ian Holloway	GIS Officer

Others:

Apologies were received from:

Mr Pete Evans, Ms Lucy Karger, Ms Audrey Reilly, Ms Angela Siggery, Mr Matt Brien.

Agenda item 1.2

Conflict of Interest

Mr Enoch-Tranby and Ms Grant reported a conflict of interest for item 3.2 EKY Return to Country project. Mr Enoch-Tranby as an employee for Jabalbina, and Ms Grant as an Eastern Kuku Yalanji elder.

Agenda item 2.1

Chair's report

Discussion:

The Chair provided the following updates since the last report:

- In July, attended the Indigenous Peoples Forum 3-day capacity-building workshop on the systems and processes of the World Heritage Convention, held at UNESCO in Paris.
- Noted several statements delivered by the Indigenous Peoples Forum during COM 47, highlighting an increase in references to Indigenous Peoples and cultural values.
- Presented at a side event on UNESCO's and CBD's commitment to cooperation under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, ensuring strong representation of Indigenous Peoples in this process.
- In August, visited the WTMA office and met with Scott, Sean and Willie to discuss previous board meetings.
- Was unable to attend the visit of the Director of the World Heritage Centre to the region in September due to workshops in Brazil, preparing for the CBD's first meeting as a permanent subsidiary, scheduled for mid to late October in Panama.
- Maintained regular check-ins with the Executive during this busy travel period.

Attended 47COM World Heritage Committee Mtg –

- Gave an update on the work of the IIPFWH, particularly with Aust and Canad's support to conduct a 3-day capacity building workshop for Indigenous peoples globally on the systems and processes of the World Heritage Convention
- Several statements provided by the IIPFWH across the agenda with a substantial increase of the mention of Indigenous Peoples and cultural values than ever before
- Presented in the Side Event for UNESCO and CBD's commitment for cooperation between Conventions
- Requesting increased engagement and support of Indigenous Peoples and cultural values
- Met with the IUCN DG, **Dr Grethel Aguilar**, and Director, World Heritage IUCN **Tim Badman** on their visit to Cairns for the Reef and Wet Tropics.
- Comments for the SoWT and Annual Report to meet WTMA's obligations to submit both reports to both Ministers and houses of Parliament by end Sept.
- Passing through Cairns and took opportunity to call into WTMA for couple of hours and catch up with Scott and Sean and Willie.

Resolution:

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

Agenda item 2.2

Executive Director's report

Summary:

- Scott thanked Lucy Karger, Phil Polden, Cam Simpson for the leadership role they took on while the YCA team experienced some staffing disruptions. Contingent Field Coordinators, Lukasz Podgorski and Richard Rheinhardt, have been engaged to support field officers and supervisors, with positive outcomes. Scott also acknowledged Justin O'Mahoney who acted in the Team leader role for a short period.
- A values workshop was held in September to operationalise WTMA's RICE values (Respect, Integrity, Collaboration and Empowerment).
- Continuous service milestones were celebrated for Saskia (25 years), Jonathan (20 years), and Scott (30 years).
- Amendments to the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*, approved at Meeting 130 are not progressing due to legislative priorities but will continue to be explored. Version 3.2 of the zoning map has been published, reflecting Digital Cadastral Database (DCDB) updates.
- The Limited Visitor Infrastructure / Developed Visitor Infrastructure (LVI/DVI) Guidelines require revision due to inconsistencies, with a second version to be prepared for out-of-session approval.
- WTMA hosted visits from IUCN and UNESCO representatives, including Dr Grethel Aguilar and Lazare Eloundou Assomo. Discussions highlighted Wet Tropics values, biodiversity, and challenges, with site visits to Russell River and Skyrail. Gratitude was extended to Skyrail for their hospitality.
- Engagement with Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) focused on the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) and feral pig management using integrated approaches.
- The Tracks and Trails program, including the Wangetti and Smithfield Mountain Bike projects, has transitioned to QPWS&P Capital Delivery, now managed by Project Director Matt Brien.
- Over 500ha of Yellow Crazy Ant (YCA) treatment was conducted, including drone and hand baiting. Milestone achievements include 1,076.2ha declared eradicated and 2,126.6ha under active management.
- Restoration efforts include a new steering committee for the Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance and collaboration with Jabalbina and the Cairns Institute on a Green Economy Strategy.
- WTMA met with the QTIC Board and launched the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides (WTWHG). Cultural awareness training is underway. Additional funding has been secured for WTWHG, Return to Country precinct planning, and ongoing discussions are occurring for YCA support.

Discussion:

- Ms Driml asked about the relationship between the detection of new YCA infestations and the use of improved detection methods. Mr Buchanan explained that while enhanced detection methods are identifying new infestations, the rate of treatment and eradication continues to outpace the rate of new detections.
- Mr Buchanan provided an update on the YCA funding situation. WTMA is awaiting confirmation of Commonwealth funding, which may not be finalised until the May 2026 budget. He emphasised that the program requires ongoing funding post 2028, as the process from detection to confirmed eradication spans eight years.

Resolution:

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

Actions:

- Updated LVI/DVI guideline to be provided to Board out of session.

Agenda item 2.3

Previous minutes Board Meeting No. 131

Discussion:

- Ms Sally Driml commented that the previous process and receiving draft minutes early was helpful.

Resolution:

The Board **approved** Minutes Board Meeting 131.

Agenda item 3.1

Department of Climate Change, Energy, The Environment and Water (DCCEEW) Cultural Values inclusion options workshop

Summary:

Ms Dampney provided a presentation on recognising and incorporating First Nations Values for World Heritage properties. The presentation outlined various options, including Acknowledgement of Country, interpretation initiatives, property management arrangements, updates to management planning documentation, formal name changes, inclusion of values in the property's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, renomination under both the National and World Heritage Lists, and other potential future opportunities. Ms Dampney also highlighted current priorities and processes being undertaken at WTMA to progress this work.

Discussion:

- Ms Grant provided a summary of the history of the Wet Tropics World Heritage listing in 1988, focusing on the recognition of cultural values and broader developments in cultural values recognition within and beyond the UNESCO World Heritage system.
- Ms Grant raised the option of retrospective recognition for sites listed prior to 1992 under the previous criteria linking 'Man and Nature,' which could provide a pathway for including cultural value. Chrissy cited the SOUV of the Great Barrier Reef as an example.
- Ms Dampney noted a challenge with this approach, highlighting that the original submission for the Wet Tropics listing did not include cultural values, making it difficult for the Commonwealth to argue that cultural values were part of the original intent.
- Chrissy suggested that the path forward would be to work with other countries on Decision 47 COM 11 (paragraph 7) including a meeting between DCCEEW, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies and IUCN, and the Indigenous Forum to discuss this resolution.
- Discussions will continue with DCCEEW, IUCN, Canada, Brazil, and Belgium to progress this idea to 48th session of the World Heritage Committee. DCCEEW has contacted the World Heritage Centre but has not yet received a response. This approach would require changes to the operational guidelines.
- Ms Driml inquired about risks of renomination: Ms Dampney confirmed there is no risk of losing the listing.
- Ms Lively expressed support for including Acknowledgements of Country on government websites.

Resolution:

The Board:

- **Noted** the presentation
- **Requested** to be kept informed of ongoing work,
- **Requested** that the preparation for 48th session be as consultative as possible
- **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.

Report 4.3: DCCEEW REPORT

(Note the DCCEEW report was held earlier in the agenda than typical due to scheduling requirements).

Summary: DCCEEW has seen significant leadership changes, with Mr Mike Kaiser appointed as the new Secretary following the retirement of David Fredericks. Mr Kaiser, who commenced on 14 July 2025, brings extensive experience from his previous roles in Queensland's public service. Additionally, Dr Sarah Titchen, a key figure in the Natural Heritage section, has also retired. At the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee (47COM) in Paris, Australia achieved notable successes, including the inscription of the Murujuga Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage site. This recognition was celebrated as a model for Indigenous-led nomination processes. The Committee also approved the renaming of K'gari to align with the wishes of the Butchulla Traditional Owners. Conservation updates for key Australian World Heritage sites, including the Great Barrier Reef, were adopted without amendment, reflecting Australia's preferences.

Australia's contributions to Indigenous participation in World Heritage were highlighted through financial support for the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and presentations at key events during 47COM. The Australian Heritage Council provided updates on the upcoming Round 8 of the Australian Heritage Grants program, expected to open later in 2025, and the ongoing evaluation of nominations for the 2025-26 National and Commonwealth Heritage listings. These developments underscore Australia's commitment to strengthening Indigenous governance in heritage processes and advancing conservation efforts for its World Heritage properties.

Discussion:

Dr Driml asked after the DCCEEW social and economic value of World Heritage Report. Ms Dampney advised the department is currently considering the public release of this report.

Ms Dampney advised that the First Nations Heritage Grants have been announced, with a successful application in the Wet Tropics area Protecting Minjilji: Indigenous-led Drone & Heritage Monitoring - Gimuy Wallubaru Yidinji Elders Aboriginal Corporation.

Ms Dampney further advised that the next round of the Australian Heritage grants is due to open in October / November 2025.

Resolution:

The Board **noted** the DECCEEW Report

Report 4.4. DETSI Tourism

(Note the DETSI Tourism report was held earlier in the agenda than typical due to scheduling requirements).

Mr Slattery introduced himself and advised he was filling in for Mr Evans who was unavailable for the Board meeting. Mr Slattery referred to a series of questions that had been provided by the Wet Tropics Management Authority regarding the 'Destination 2045 Plan, and provided the following update:

Initiative 1 (Destination 2045 Plan) – Tourism and the Wet Tropics Area. Of the 45 projects under the Plan, only one is in the Wet Tropics Area: the Wangetti Trail. A new Wangetti Trail Community Engagement Approach is being finalised to align with the project's transition from Tourism to the Cairns-based Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Initiative 6 – Industry (Guide Training Programs)

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides (WTWHG), a partnership between WTMA, DETSI, and TEQ, aims to enhance World Heritage presentation and visitor experiences as a key action under the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031. Phase 1 of the program has been successfully launched online, with Phases 2 and 3 in development, and a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is under review. Under the MoU, WTMA is responsible for managing and acquitting funding, overseeing contracts with external providers, promoting the program, coordinating workshops, field schools, and Champion assessments, managing program content, and providing secretariat support to project and steering committees.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml advised that the Community Consultative Community (CCC) formally welcomed the engagement process as a locally driven initiative and supported the project's transfer to QPWS&P for tracks and trails management.
- Mr Nelson inquired why WTMA is not the lead agency for reporting on the WTWHG. Mr Slattery explained that reporting is required through TEQ due to funding arrangements under the MoU, which is in the final stages of approval, and that TEQ is engaged on a range of other guides programs. Mr Buchanan noted that, as WTMA is the lead agency for the WTWHG, there may be an opportunity to streamline reporting processes to avoid duplication.
- Mr Nelson further asked if a presentation on the Wangetti project, which is part of the Destination 2045 Plan, could be made to WTMA, given its approval requirements under the Wet Tropics Management Plan. It was suggested that the Wangetti team be invited to present at the next Board meeting.

Actions:

- Invitation to be extended to QPWS to present on Wangetti at the next Board meeting.

Agenda item 3.2

Return to Country Update on Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country project (Strategy 2)

Summary: The Board were briefed on the progress of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji (EKY) Return to Country Project (RtC Project). As part of a partnership with Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, WTMA has co-designed a strategic planning project that analyses land suitability, cultural considerations, access and ecological values to provide a

streamlined framework for EKY people to return to Country. The RtC project has developed innovative solutions to map and plan around legislative, cultural and geographic constraints to ensure development barriers are reduced as much as possible.

Several significant challenges have been identified in progressing the project to the next stage. The implementation phase, aimed at enabling people to return to Country, will be complex and require coordinated commitment from multiple government departments and organisations. The WTMA Board will work closely with the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation to secure the necessary commitments to support EKY People accessing Country.

Further information on both the mapping and assessment process, and the pivot required after Cyclone Jasper was provided by Mr Holloway and Mr Wong.

Discussion:

- Mr Buchanan proposed writing to relevant State Ministers (Ministers responsible for Housing, State Development, DATSIP) and the Premier, to seek involvement and support, and to explore alternative sites outside of Freehold Aboriginal Lands.
- Dr Driml suggested seeking support from the Minister for Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation for support, and Mr Buchanan agreed that the Minister would be contacted.
- Dr Driml highlighted the need for WTMA to eventually exit the project due to constraints. Mr Paterson clarified that WTMA and Jabalbina would continue collaborating to maintain the area's biological and cultural integrity, including ongoing management responsibilities like leases.
- Mr Nelson raised concerns about deliverables, potential gaps, and the need for contingency plans if funding is unavailable, stressing the urgency of decisions. Mr Wong noted the risks associated with the project beyond 30 June next year.

Resolution:

The Board:

- ***Notes*** progress with the Return to Country Project (RTC project)
- ***Approve*** WTMA and Jabalbina to collaborate on advocacy material, to support the two Boards to jointly seek Queensland Government commitment to resource implementation.

Actions:

Project team to provide a communications plan / next steps to seek resourcing and support, and contingency plans.

Agenda item 3.3

WTMA State of Wet Tropics 2025-26 Topic (Strategy 6)

Summary: Mr Wong provided a brief overview of the paper, seeking the Board's approval to develop the 2025–26 State of the Wet Tropics Report. The report will be based on the mid-term review of the Authority's Climate Adaptation Plan 2020–2030 and will include a review of current climate adaptation research, a summary of findings from the review of the Plan's goals and strategic actions, and recommendations for future adjustments.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml advised that the CCC supported the idea, and it was noted that the Board paper erroneously excluded the IAC in review processes. Mr Wong clarified that all three committees and the Board will have the opportunity to review and provide advice and suggestions on the document

Resolution:

The Board:

Approved the theme for the 2025–26 State of the Wet Tropics Report to be a report on the outcomes of the mid-term review of the Authority's Climate Adaptation Plan for the Wet Tropics 2020–2030.

Actions:

The Authority to develop the project plan including key dates for Board and Committee consideration.

Agenda item 3.4

Budget (Strategy 6)

Summary: Mr Buchanan provided an overview of the budget paper, highlighting the following key issues:

FY26 Budget Overview:

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) has loaded its 2025–26 budget of $11,528,137, derived from multiple fund classes. Key funding sources include two Federation Funding Agreements (FFA). The Board was asked to endorse the 2025 – 2026 WTMA budget, including amendments made to previously approved components of the budget. The $11.5 million budget is slightly less than the 2024-25 budget, though there is an expectation of additional revenue to be received during the year.

WTMA continues to be challenged by revenue funding that does not include consideration of increasing costs, and significant reductions will have to be made to programs, particularly for 2026-27 to enable a balanced budget. WTMA is seeking a further contribution of $60,000 for the WTWHG, to be shared between DETSI and TEQ under a proposed three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). DETSI has agreed to contribute $165,000 (CBG fund class) to cover lease, electricity, cleaning, and insurance costs for the Ports North Office.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml inquired whether staff salaries are set to incrementally increase this year and if this has been accounted for in the budget. Mr Buchanan confirmed that salary increases have been factored in.
- Mr Nelson asked if a contingency fund exists. Mr Buchanan advised that no formal contingency fund is in place.
- Mr Nelson emphasised the importance of advocacy and improving the organisation's communication of its achievements and challenges.
- Ms Wheeler proposed maintaining a record of efficiencies implemented, such as merging roles, combining tasks, and enhancing clarity in resource allocation reporting.
- The Board discussed the need to better understand budget flexibility, particularly in adjusting allocations and timing, as well as the resources required for additional communication to highlight achievements and secure further funding.

- Mr Buchanan reported that significant savings have been achieved in the YCA program, though some of these are temporary.

Resolution:

The Board

- **Endorsed** the 2025-2026 budget, including the amendments made to the WII Fund Class budget (previously approved),
- **noted** that WTMA is actively seeking additional funds.

Agenda item 3.5

Launch of Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides Program and next steps (Strategy 4)

Summary: Ms Siemionow provided a presentation to the Board on the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides. She outlined the program's context of delivery, its strategic alignment with other initiatives, and the structured training framework, which includes the levels of Guardians, Defenders, and Champions. Ms Siemionow highlighted the phased approach to implementation, noting that the program is currently in Phase 2 of 3 (2025–26). She also shared early positive feedback on the program and discussed future opportunities for its extension and potential funding avenues.

Discussion:

- The Board discussed ownership of Intellectual Property (IP) and the potential sharing of materials through formal agreements.
- The program has been designed with general information that can be tailored with site-specific content, offering opportunities for cost recovery.
- Tourism Australia was identified as a potential partner to explore extending the program nationally.
- A model from Murujuga was highlighted, where individuals working with the organisation are required to complete a paid course similar to WTWHG Modules 1 and 2.
- Ensuring users acknowledge the WTWHG program was noted as a way to strengthen WTMA branding and engagement.
- Initial discussions have considered linking the course to permits, with positive feedback from operators. The absence of a course fee supports this approach, and with 90% of permits set to expire in the next two years, there is a significant opportunity to engage operators during this period.
- The program should adopt a forward-looking approach by aligning with other initiatives to demonstrate value.
- WTMA should avoid duplicating training already provided by other agencies, particularly those focused on tourism operations.
- Partnering with local chambers of commerce was suggested as a way to expand engagement.
- The CCC commended the program and proposed linking it to the Australian Curriculum to serve as an educational resource.
- Additional opportunities include engaging bushwalking groups, scout groups, and local councils, as well as leveraging the "Queensland Welcomes You" initiative through the Gateway Schools program.

Resolution:

The Board

Noted the Launch of Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides Program and next steps

Agenda item 3.6

World Heritage Stewardship – Post Cyclone Jasper Disaster Funding Arrangements

Summary: Dr Palma and Mr Wong provided a presentation on the Post Cyclone Jasper Disaster Funding Arrangements, and the damage and impacts of Tropical Cyclone Jasper, highlighting its effects on social systems, infrastructure, and biodiversity. They outlined the components of Sub-program E, led by WTMA, which includes fast-tracking recovery works, developing materials to ensure Environmental Management Plans include clear guidelines for event responses, and supporting approaches to rebuild infrastructure in ways that enhance resilience to future events while respecting the environmental and cultural values of the area. Additionally, they discussed the development of guidance materials to promote the maintenance and recovery of green infrastructure. The presentation also covered future work and key priorities for protecting the area's Outstanding Universal Value, including monitoring, forest and vegetation recovery, and the protection of threatened species.

Discussion included

- Ms Grant asked about the proposed Goby fish project by Griffith University in Coopers Creek, specifically regarding advice given to ensure Griffith University engages with Jabalbina on culturally sensitive areas. Dr Palma agreed to follow up and make further enquiries on this matter.
- Dr Driml enquired about the updated Environmental Management Plans as they apply to recovery of roads, and any additional measures required. Dr Palma explained the approach to road-clearing works, emphasising the importance of minimising environmental and cultural impacts.

Resolution:

The Board

- **Noted** the presentation of World Heritage Stewardship – Post Cyclone Jasper Disaster Funding Arrangements

Action

- Dr Palma agreed to follow up and make further enquiries regarding researcher engagement in sensitive areas of Cooper Creek, and report back.

Agenda item 4.0 Reports

Agenda item 4.1 Advisory Committee reports to the Board

Community Consultative Committee

Dr Driml provided an update:

- CCC members serve three-year terms, but recent departures required a recruitment process. This was the second meeting since this recruitment took place, with recent meetings having a focus on bringing new members up to speed.

- The CCC has recruited two Rainforest Aboriginal People, but there was some confusion about engagement across different committees. Six new members have been appointed until the end of the next term, but it was recommended their appointment letters be amended to provide full three-year terms.
- Key items and issues discussed at the last meeting included:
    - Community confusion about biosecurity responsibilities, with a presentation from Mr Humphreys (YCA) addressing this.
    - Acknowledgement of funding for the extension of the Yellow Crazy Ant (YCA) program and support.
    - A briefing on the WTMA communications strategy, with CCC suggesting they provide input into communication strategies for specific projects.
    - Recommendations for the State of the Wet Tropics Report to use smaller, digestible communication pieces with simple, clear messaging that evokes an emotional response.
    - A briefing on the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides (WTWHG) and its linkages to teachers and community groups.
    - Ms Weber presented the process for reviewing the Climate Adaptation Plan, a key priority for the CCC.
    - A joint CCC/IAC/SAC workshop is proposed for February 2026 to discuss changes and refocus the plan, with information to be provided out of session.
    - Collaboration with other bodies and community engagement remain critical, with a proposal to develop a Climate Charter to encourage community involvement.
    - QPWS&P provided a briefing on the Wangetti Trail communications and engagement. CCC members are closely involved and suggested inviting the local engagement team to the next meeting.

Scientific Advisory Committee

Professor Williams provided an update:

- The main item discussed at the last SAC meeting was the Highland Forest of the Wet Tropics nomination as an endangered ecological community under the EPBC Act, which involved a substantial 100-page submission. The Threatened Species Commissioner advised that the nomination was unsuccessful at this stage, and it was suggested that the nomination could be revised as a faunal nomination (e.g., insects or vertebrates).
- Mr Wong provided further information based on subsequent discussions, noting that the committee focused on the 'threatened' criteria and wanted greater clarity on the certainty of threats. The nomination was compared to other examples and deemed not to meet the 'threatened' level for flora and structure. The next submission window opens in October 2025, with a deadline of 26 March for resubmission.
- Professor Williams provided an overview of discussions from the July 2025 meeting, including plans for the review of the Climate Adaptation Plan, which will incorporate expert input. The SAC also received a presentation from Professor Brendan Mackey (Griffith University) and Associate Professor Diane Jarvis (JCU) on the NESP Resilient Landscapes project, emphasising the importance of Indigenous engagement and the opportunity to leverage the Wet Tropics' strong scientific and data foundations. Additionally, an information session was held on the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's (QPWS) initiative to establish the Values-Based Management Planning Framework.
- Dr Driml asked about the linkages and progress to the Landscapes Resilience Project. Professor Williams advised the process is ongoing with a Highlands Rainforest Management prioritisation workshop is planned for the second half of 2025.

Joint WTMA-Terrain Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC)

MS Grant provided an update on the IAC's recent meeting and other discussions.

- Concerns were raised about entities using the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum as an endorsement mechanism, which is not its intended purpose.
- Indigenous engagement has been a focus through recent and upcoming conferences in Cairns, including NRMs and the Australian Land Conservation Alliance.
- Discussions are ongoing about lands not under protection regimes, aiming to meet Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework under the CBD (30 by 30 by 30).
- A meeting was held between Terrain and WTMA, including the introduction of a new member. The committee now consists of three males and two females.
- The IAC is developing a program of work and seeks input from the Board on potential tasks. Climate adaptation work will require contributions from all three committees, with Ellen to share information out of session.
- Work is progressing on an agreement-making framework under the partnership agreement, with RAAPT actively working on agreements.

Resolution:

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

Agenda item 4.2 Director's matters

Ms A. Lively provided the following update with discussion:

- An overview was provided on the establishment of the RAPTT, originally comprising four members tasked with advising TERRAIN and WTMA on refreshing the Regional Agreement.
- RAPTT secured partial Reef Assist funding to host a forum on establishing a regional governance body, with additional funding being sought to ensure the forum proceeds, potentially in the second half of the year.
- A National Gathering in Port Douglas attracted over 300 delegates (to be confirmed) to discuss forming a national advocacy body focused on PBCs and Traditional Owner groups, with workshops held over three days on structuring regional, state, and national bodies.

Ms N. Wheeler provided the following update with discussion:

- Attended a meeting with Commonwealth Minister Don Farrell and Minister Murray Watt's adviser, and took the opportunity to raise YCA funding.
- Hosted the QTIC Board meeting at the WTMA office, and thanked Mr Buchanan and the team for meeting with the QTIC Board.
- Held regular meetings with the Qld Environment Minister, Director-General, and Chief of Staff of DETSI.
- Engaged with several Cairns tourism operators to discuss WTMA and guide-related matters.
- Ms Salmeron-Rodrigues requested further information on QTICs First Nations Tourism strategy.

Mr W. Enoch-Tranby provided the following update with discussion:

- Recently transitioned back into a tourism role with Jabalbina after a period in youth justice.

- Currently developing the Dubuji Boardwalk tourism centre with plans to offer guided walks focused on rainforest, beach, and special cultural sites in the area.
- Exploring opportunities to engage with philanthropic groups for support.
- Provided an overview of several upcoming tour options.

Mr M. Nelson provided the following update with discussion:

- Since the Board induction, has taken an advocacy role for the WTWHG and engaging with early adopters through a series of meetings.
- Extensive travel since the last meetings and Board induction.
- Noted inconsistencies in messaging about the Wet Tropics, which are causing fragmented communication and detracting from the Area's significance, and identified that a body of work is required to address this.
- The Wet Tropics holds one of the greatest concentrations of First Nations stories in the country, presenting a significant opportunity to better promote these narratives. WTMA is positioned to lead this discussion.
- Chrissy noted that some operators provide incorrect information, while Willie highlighted the WTWHG as a strong initiative to address this and unify messaging.
- Chrissy referenced Uluru as an example where tour guides, including bus operators, require accreditation to ensure consistent messaging. Accreditation is being explored.
- Michael emphasised the opportunity to link the WTWHG to permits at no cost to providers, noting that visitors come for both the GBR and the Wet Tropics. Tourism bodies support mandating the WTWHG for permit holders.
- Detailed discussion was held on these matters and Michael expressed interest in continuing discussions on a pathway forward.

Dr S. Driml provided the following update with discussion:

Dr Driml advised that she had reviewed the Jabalbina Green Economy Strategy cost-benefit analysis, and highlighted that while carbon appears to be the most profitable option for land use, that further engagement with carbon experts should be undertaken to fully understand the costs and benefits of this land use option.

Resolution:

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

Agenda item 4.4 Queensland Department reports (continued)

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships

Summary: The QPWS Northern Region report highlights key updates across human resources, pest management, fire programs, capital works, and estate expansion. Recruitment is ongoing for several positions, including Cyclone Jasper recovery and pest teams. Progress continues VBMF assessments, with approvals for multiple park aggregations and workshops held with Traditional Owners. Pest control efforts target feral pigs, cattle, and invasive weeds, while threatened species monitoring focuses on feral cat impacts. The fire program has seen increased capacity, with aerial and ground burns completed across numerous parks and fire training delivered, including to Traditional Owner partners. Capital works include cyclone recovery repairs and upgrades at Daintree, Wallaman Falls, and Josephine Falls. Estate expansions are progressing, with recommendations for forest reserves to be

dedicated as national parks or State forests. Monitoring of a released cassowary near Lake Eacham continues to ensure visitor safety and wildlife welfare.

Discussion:

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

- Disaster recovery efforts outlined in the report, with further details on the QPWS Disaster Recovery team's plans for expansion and incorporation of lessons learned in asset management.
- Progress on the Jindalba boardwalk, with a mid-November opening anticipated. Liaison with Tourism Queensland is underway to ensure tourism operators are informed of the opening date.
- Completion of the dry season fire program.
- Ongoing pest management programs and cultural surveys conducted under joint management arrangements with First Nations partners.
- A 12-day Women in Fire Program, featuring an international exchange held in Undara, which included field visits within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Acknowledgement of Mr Buchanan's suggestion regarding potential engagement with RRRC on the Russell River pig control program.

Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage (OGBR&WH, DETSI)

Summary: Updates were provided across several World Heritage Areas. For the K'gari World Heritage Area, the EOI process for the next KWHAC term is underway, with appointments expected by year-end, and a K'gari Biosecurity Strategy workshop was hosted by the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation in June 2025. The Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh Section) reopened on 4 July 2025 following flood rebuilds, with the EOI process for the next RWHAC term progressing, the Riversleigh Tourism Content Toolkit nearing completion, and a fossil audit ongoing. The Gondwana Rainforests GWHAC met in July 2025 on Yugambeh Country, discussing climate adaptation, visitor management, and ranger capacity-building, with the next meeting scheduled for November 2025. For the Great Barrier Reef, UNESCO's Lazare Assomo visited in September 2025 ahead of the 2026 World Heritage Committee meeting, with discussions on conservation and potential danger listing. Key updates included the completion of a Scientific Consensus Statement on Reef water quality, ongoing reviews of the Reef 2050 plans, and AIMS' August 2025 report highlighting coral mortality and declining recovery periods. A State of Conservation Report is due to UNESCO by February 2026.

Resolution:

Board **noted** the State Government reports.

Agenda item 5.0 Actions arising, and significant correspondence

Agenda item 5.1 Actions arising Board Meeting 131

Agenda Item	Actions arising from Meeting #131 and previous 27 June 2025	Comments
#131 Agenda item 2.3- **Previous minutes Board Meeting #131**	Principal Advisor to follow up S62 Guidelines being published on WTMA website	Completed
#131 Agenda item 3.1 Draft State of Wet Tropics and Annual 2024-25 Reports (Strategy 6)	Principal Advisor to: a) Incorporate CCC, SAC and IAC feedback on communicating the SoWT report - results and key messages b) Develop a comms plan for SoWT report c) Send to CCC, IAC, and SAC- next week to discuss out of session or in a meeting d) Send Annual Report out of session to the Board for approval.	a) Complete b) Complete c) Complete d) Complete
#131 Agenda item 3.2 **WTMA Communications strategy (Strategy 3)**	Committee secretariats to send Communications Strategy to IAC, SAC and CCC once it's finalised.	Complete
#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 finalised
#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 b) Underway / complete. Has been used for CCC meeting.
#131 Agenda item 4.4 Queensland Department reports QPWS&P	WTMA to contact Mr Beri (QPWS) to discuss disaster funding	Complete
#131 Agenda item 4.4 Queensland Department reports Tourism (DETSI)	WTMA and DETSI to touch base regarding suggestions to improve community engagement	Ongoing - Cairns based public consultation for Wangetti has been set up by DETSI
#131 **Agenda item 4.5** **Kuranda Envirocare on Electric Ants concerns (Strategy 1)**	WTMA to work with Kuranda EnviroCare and support a letter to DCCEEW	Complete. Letter sent
#130 **Agenda item 3.5- Update on Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country project**	Ms Chrissy Grant to touch base with Ms Audrey Reilly in relation to burial/ cemetery sites.	Completed
#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.

Discussion:

- Dr Driml requested an update on the communications plan for the soon to be released State of Wet Tropics Report
- Ms Grant provided an update in relation to the action related to burial/cemetery sites. Mr Wong advised that this work is currently related to working with Council regarding burial on Country under Return to Country planning.

Actions:

Mr McNamara to Provide the SOWT comms strategy to Dr Driml when finalised

Agenda item 5.2 Significant correspondence

List and copies of correspondence distributed prior to meeting.

Date	To/From	Description	Action for Directors
20/06/2025	From Executive Director to Gavin Singleton	Letter of Support for Yirrganydji Gurabana Aboriginal Corporation's funding application to the *Queensland Government's Looking After Country Grant Program*.	Note
20/06/2025	From Executive Director to Gavin Singleton	Letter of Support for Yirrganydji Gurabana Aboriginal Corporation's funding application to the *Queensland Government's Reef Assist Traditional Owner Grant Program*.	Note
25/06/2025	From Executive Director to Joelene Gertz	Letter of Support for Choorechillum (Ngadjon Jii PBC) Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC funding application to the Queensland Government's Reef Assist Traditional Owner Grant Program	Note
25/06/2025	From Executive Director to the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Letter of Support – DFAT National Foundation for Australia-China Relations Grant Application: Establishing an Australian-Chinese Community of Practice on Sustainable Tourism Management in Protected Areas	Note
01/08/2025	From WTMA Board Chair to Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Senator for Queensland and Minister for the Environment and Water	An Invitation to Cairns between 14-22 August to inspect yellow crazy and infestation and Wet Tropics World Heritage Area	Note
15/09/2025	From Executive Director WTMA and CEO Jabalbina-Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation to Major Scomazzon / Douglas Shire Council	Letter providing thanks and seeking in principle support from the Douglas Shire Council for outcomes from a meeting on the 5 September to discuss the Easter Kuku Yalanji (EKY) Return to Country Project.	Note
16/09/2025	From Chair, Wet Tropics Management Authority Board to Senator the Hon, Murray Watt	Letter requesting a meeting during November parliamentary sitting week in Canberra	Note

Resolution:

The Board noted the significant correspondence.

Agenda item 6.0 Other Business

Discussion:

- 21 November 2025 has been selected as the date for Board meeting 133

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.

As a number of Directors had to leave, the Board self-assessment will be provided to Board Directors after the meeting.

Communique

Phoebe Kinley worked on draft communique through the Board meeting, however the final draft was to be provided to Directors for approval after the meeting due to time constraints,

Actions:

Mr Buchanan to send the communique to key stakeholders and contacts.

Meeting closed 4.30pm.