

WET TROPICS MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

12 August 2011

The 22nd meeting of the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council was held today in Brisbane.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon Vicky Darling MP, Queensland Government Minister for Environment. Other Ministers attending were:

- The Hon Tony Burke MP, Australian Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
- The Hon Jan Jarratt MP, Queensland Government Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business.

The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP, Australian Government Minister for Tourism apologised and was represented by an official from his Department.

Wet Tropics Management Plan

Ministers received from the Wet Tropics Management Authority the Wet Tropics Amendment Management Plan and associated zoning maps, and a report on submissions made in response to a consultation draft. Ministers discussed the substantial program of community and industry consultation that has underpinned the development of the plan. Ministers were advised that the major changes in the Amendment Plan include:

- strengthening protection of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area through amendments to the zoning system
- amending the conditions that must be met prior to the issue of a permit for community services infrastructure, requiring that a permit may be issued only if there is no prudent and feasible alternative and no net adverse impact on the integrity of the World Heritage Area
- reducing regulatory restrictions on access to certain roads
- introducing provision for offsetting unavoidable impacts permitted under the plan
- widening the range of agencies entitled to appeal zoning decisions made by the Authority

Ministers noted the report on submissions and agreed to recommend the amendment plan and zoning maps to the Queensland Governor in Council.

Management Scheme Intergovernmental Agreement for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area

Ministers agreed to amendments to the *Management Scheme Intergovernmental Agreement for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area* that give effect to Council of Australian Government (COAG) decisions requiring the abolition of the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council. The draft agreement proposes that future coordination between the Australian and Queensland Governments will be achieved

through the responsible Ministers, being the Australian and Queensland Ministers with responsibility for World Heritage. A number of other amendments were also agreed that bring terminology up to date and streamline administration of the Agreement.

Ministers discussed the importance of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area for the tourism industry and stressed the importance of continued close engagement between the Wet Tropics Management Authority and tourism Ministers and their agencies. To this end, Ministers endorsed the continued participation by tourism agency observers at Authority Board meetings.

Appointment of an Indigenous Director to the Wet Tropics Management Authority

Ministers agreed to nominate Ms Leah Talbot to be a Director of the Wet Tropics Management Authority, filling a vacancy for an Aboriginal director. Ministers agreed that Ms Talbot has excellent qualifications for appointment and look forward to her appointment by Governor in Council and her subsequent service as a Director.

Report of the Authority Chairperson

Ministers received and discussed a report from Associate Professor Peter Valentine, Chair of the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Associate Professor Valentine's report included reference to:

- Infrastructure and planning issues affecting the World Heritage Area
- The risks climate change poses for the outstanding universal values of the World Heritage Area and the need for a regional adaptation program to improve landscape resilience
- The impacts of Cyclone Yasi and the positive response of the two governments to recovery and rehabilitation
- Indigenous engagement in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, including the need to support capacity development among Traditional Owner communities
- The risks created by novel biosecurity threats including myrtle rust, electric ants, Asian honeybees and weeds such as *Miconia* and Siam Weed and the need for very effective surveillance and response measures
- Tourism developments in the region, including the Authority's work to support high standards of presentation and interpretation by tour guides
- The Authority's active role promoting scientific research in support of the management of the Wet Tropics and other rainforest ecosystems and its aim to strengthen its knowledge brokering and communications capacity
- The Authority's contribution to World Heritage management in the Asia/Pacific region through training and other capacity building activities