



Board Update

The Board of Wet Tropics Management Authority held its 90th Board meeting in Cairns on the 20-21 August 2012. Major topics of discussion included:

- The recently completed Australian World Heritage Gateway study report and prospectus
- Training modules that support the training of tour guides who work in and around the World Heritage Area.

Joining the Chair Peter Valentine, were fellow Directors Alastair Birtles, Ro Hill, Julia Leu and Leah Talbot. Representatives from a number of Queensland government departments were also present including Ross Macleod, Director, Partnerships and World Heritage, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection; Andrew Millerd A/Regional Manager Wet Tropic Region, Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sports and Racing; and Deputy Director General Paul Martyn from the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games.

Directors were delighted that the Wet Tropics National Landscape was launched on 8 August by Commonwealth Environment Minister the Hon. Tony Burke MP. The Board recognises and values the importance of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to the far north Queensland economy and were pleased with the tourism initiatives that the Authority is leading in collaboration with various state and commonwealth agencies, including

- The recently completed Australian World Heritage Gateway study report and prospectus, which further scopes this important project that has the aim of providing a focus for a compelling, inspiring and engaging visitor experience based on the Wet Tropics, the Great Barrier Reef and other World Heritage Areas.
- The successful delivery of training modules to support the training of tour guides who work in and around the World Heritage Area. To date over 65 places have been allocated and several guides have already completed the course. The Authority will now negotiate with QTIC and other state government agencies to explore ways of continuing funding support for the guide training.

The Board encouraged Authority staff to continue working closely with the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance (RAPA) leadership to help establish a framework for their involvement and cooperation in protecting World Heritage values. The emergence of the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance provides a potentially valuable partner and pathway for the Authority's engagement with the 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups. The Authority was pleased to provide support and advice to the Alliance in its establishment phase and looks forward to a steadily strengthening relationship. It is intended to negotiate a documented agreement that provides for

clear lines and principles of communication, engagement and commitments between RAPA and the Authority.

Directors welcomed a presentation from Buzz Symonds and Bruce Lawson from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs on the joint management experience on Cape York Peninsula. Buzz and Bruce provide leadership to land tenure resolution and Indigenous engagement issues on Cape York Peninsula. Directors welcomed their insights, which will contribute to the Authority's own approaches to engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal people.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee (SAC) Steve Williams advised the Board that Jon Day from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority attended a recent SAC meeting to discuss the issue of World Heritage and Outstanding Universal Value. He advised that SAC had discussed land management of the Great Barrier Reef and how such advice may have implications for the protection and management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. Directors noted that

- The Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area were similar in many regards including World Heritage criteria and values, approaches to management and shared similar threats
- There have been significant advances and improvements in the design, construction and maintenance standards for infrastructure within the World Heritage Area. However, invasive pest species are more prevalent now than at listing and their impact presumably more pervasive and difficult to manage. Similarly, climate change remains a threat to the condition of the World Heritage Area
- The Authority, with their research partners, have attempted to establish baseline data on the (status and trends) condition of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and it has proven difficult to both identify appropriate indicators and to maintain monitoring effort in the absence of long term funding support.

The Authority continues to make solid progress in the redevelopment of a refreshed website which had a soft launch early August after four months of preparation. The updated Wet Tropics website reflects the new branding of the organisation and many hours of work and input from Wet Tropics Management Authority staff.

The next Board meeting will be held in Cairns in November 2012.

