



BOARD COMMUNIQUE 128

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) is a statutory body overseen by an independent Board of Directors. The current Board of Directors includes Ms Chrissy Grant (Chair), Ms Robin Clark, Dr Sally Driml, Mr William Enoch-Tranby, Ms Ailsa Lively, Professor Stephen Williams, and Mr Scott Buchanan (Executive Director). The Authority's role is to ensure Australia's obligation to the World Heritage Convention is met in relation to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area).

The Authority's Board of Directors met on **Thursday 5 September 2024**. In this communique, the Board reports on the following topics:

- **Board update**
- **Expert workshop landscape resilience and recovery**
- **Planned burn guidelines**
- **Partnership agreement**

Board update

A minute's silence was held in acknowledgement of the passing of a number of important Rainforest Aboriginal Elders who have made significant contributions to the advancement of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples across both the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef.

This board meeting was scheduled to align with the 20th Cassowary Awards allowing Board Directors to attend the awards ceremony on Friday 6 September at Tjapukai NOW in Carins.

It has been a particularly busy period for both the Authority and Board Directors with preparation of the Annual Report, State of the Wet Tropics Report, release of the Authority's Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program's Report Card 2023-24 and a Restoration Alliance field day.

Updates were provided from the Authority's advisory committees including Prof Stephen Williams Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee, Dr Sally Driml Chair of the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) and Ms Chrissy Grant as Co-Chair of the Authority and Terrain NRM's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC). The Board noted the resignation of a number of CCC members (due to external factors) and additional female representation is required on the IAC. The Board will subsequently be calling for new membership through an EOI process.

Expert workshop landscape resilience and recovery

The Board were presented on outcomes of a three-day expert workshop held by the Authority's Scientific Advisory Committee. Taking a tenure, resource and status blind process, workshop participants prioritised values and management responses to identify threats to world heritage values. The results of the workshop will help inform the management of the Eastern Forests of Far North Queensland Priority Place as identified under the Commonwealth Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032. Workshop participants highlighted climate change, invasive species and fire as the most significant issues for the Outstanding Universal Value of the Area. Participants also recognised that there are several ecosystems and many endemic species under serious threat that are not currently listed under relevant legislation but worthy of a management response. The Board acknowledged the great work undertaken by all those involved and look forward to further progress on this initiative.

Planned burn guidelines

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) provided an update on the Draft Wet Tropics Planned Burn Guidelines currently under development. The Board welcomed the work however expressed concern over the lack of early engagement of Rainforests Aboriginal Peoples as traditional fire practitioners. This was seen as a lost opportunity to utilise their expertise in informing the development of the guidelines. The Board acknowledged QPWS&P's commitment to using park-based fire strategies and values-based management planning workshops to ensure cultural burning is incorporated into burn programs while increasing the capacity of Indigenous ranger groups. On-ground delivery of fire management across the Wet Tropics will be boosted by additional funding through the Statewide Fire Management Uplift with a new Fire Uplift team being established with four new positions in the Northern Region.

Partnership agreement

A progress update was presented on the refresh of the Partnership Agreement between the Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) for the period 2024 to 2029. Under the agreement QPWS&P is responsible for the delivery of the on-ground management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to the highest standards to meet Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention. Key partnership activities for the 5 years include engagement in the Values Based Management Framework, development of the Wet Tropics Burn Guidelines, mitigating climate change impacts on mountain top species, a rights-based approach for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples engagement, consistent messaging and branding for the World Heritage Area, and improved collaboration and coordination for permitting and self-assessment.

Board meeting 129 will be held online on 14 November 2024.

For more information, please phone 07 4241 0500 or email wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au