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‘Which Way Australia’s Rainforest Culture’: Towards Indigenous-led Management

Discussion paper about Rainforest Aboriginal peoples-led
management of the cultural values of the Wet Tropics region
and World Heritage Area

Compiled by Allan Dale, Iris C. Bohnet and Rosemary Hill with and on behalf of the
Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and the Cultural Values Project Steering Committee

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The Cultural Values Project Steering Committee managing the project and this research inquiry comprised core partners: the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance represented through key organisations and core leadership, The Cairns Institute and James Cook University, and CSIRO. Enquiries should be addressed to WetTropicsBama@gmail.com.

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Abbreviations Used in this Report

ARC	Aboriginal Rainforest Council (2005-2008), preceded by the Aboriginal Negotiating Team (2001-2005)
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DATSIMA (now DATSIP)	Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
DEH	Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage
DNR&M	Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines
FNQ NRM Ltd	Far North Queensland Natural Resources Management Ltd, trading as Terrain NRM
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy, Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IPAs	Indigenous Protected Areas
JCU	James Cook University
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PM&C	Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
RAAC	Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee (2005-2008) to the Wet Tropics Management Authority, succeeded by the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance
RAN	Rainforest Aboriginal Network (1992-94), followed by Bama Wabu (1995-2001)
RAP	Rainforest Aboriginal People
RAPA	Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance (2009-2015)
RDA FNQ&TS	Regional Development Australia, Far North Queensland and Torres Strait
RJP	Regional Jobs Program
RRRC	Reef and Rainforest Research Centre
TCI	The Cairns Institute
Terrain NRM	Terrain Natural Resource Management
TOAC	Traditional Owner Advisory Committee 2005-2008) to Terrain NRM, succeeded by the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance
WHA	World Heritage Area
WOC	Working on Country
WTAPPT	Wet Tropics Aboriginal Plan Project Team (2002-2005), succeeded by the Aboriginal Rainforest Council
WTMA	Wet Tropics Management Authority
WTQWHA	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area

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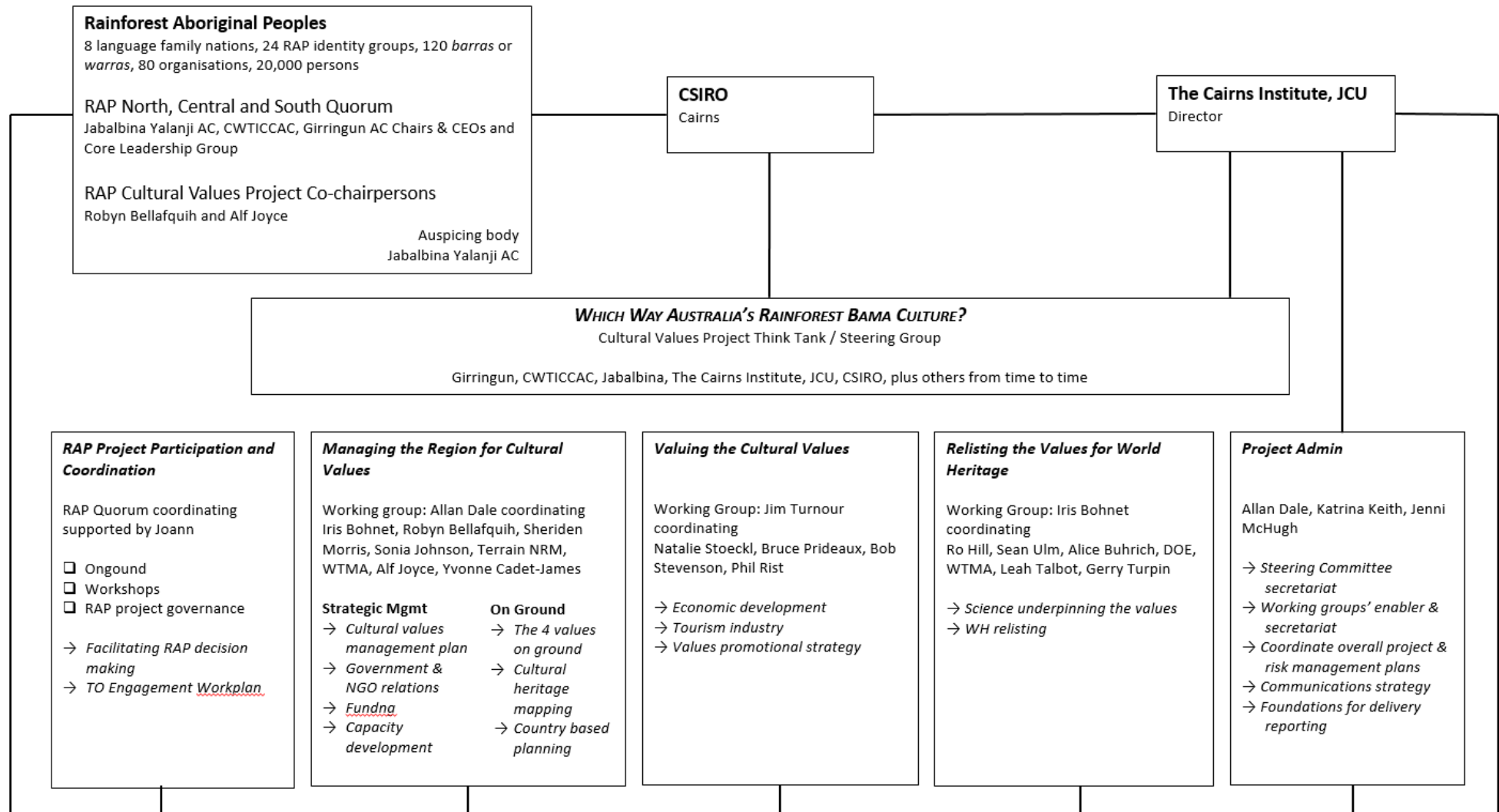
Executive Summary

The Wet Tropics region, inclusive of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (WTQWHA), stretches over 500 km along the far north Queensland coast. This rainforest dominated region has been occupied, used and enjoyed by Rainforest Aboriginal peoples (RAP) for millennia. RAP have legal interests in the vast majority of the region's landscape and an even greater interest in maintaining their governance systems, cultural values and traditional uses across the region. In order to maintain traditional land and resource uses and to keep cultural values alive, RAP committed in 2005, as identified in the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement and the 'Bama' or 'Aboriginal' Plan, to progress National Heritage listing of the area in recognition of their cultural values. In 2012, the Australian Government and the National Heritage Committee decided to recognise the Indigenous cultural values of the WTQWHA and to include them in the National Heritage List. This discussion paper builds on RAP's achievements over time and now explores ways to enhance *Indigenous-led* management of the Aboriginal cultural values of the region and to further progress the potential for World Heritage relisting of the WTQWHA for its cultural values.

1. Introduction

The Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance (RAPA), established in 2009 to support Traditional Owners in the Wet Tropics, was successful in achieving \$250,000 funding from the Australian Government, Indigenous Heritage Program for the 3-year (2013-2015) Cultural Values Project, titled '*Which Way Australia's Rainforest Aboriginal Culture: Indigenous Heritage Program?*'. The overall aim of the project is to confirm, maintain and promote the Wet Tropics region's nationally-recognised, outstanding and significant cultural heritage values and to explore relisting of the Wet Tropics region for these values. To achieve this aim, RAPA worked in collaboration with The Cairns Institute (James Cook University), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and other significant regional partners. A Project Steering Committee, established at the beginning of the project, guided and oversaw the work (Figure 1). Three closely linked working groups were also established at the beginning of the project. Both the Project Steering Committee and the working groups consisted of members from RAPA, The Cairns Institute (JCU) and the CSIRO. This paper focusses on the efforts of the Committee's "Managing the Cultural Values Working Group", and progresses RAP interests with respect to leading and securing the *Indigenous-led* management of Aboriginal cultural values of the region.

Figure 1. “Which Way Australia’s Rainforest Culture” project governance and implementation framework



Traditional Owner groups at family, clan and tribal scale already drive Indigenous-led management of the Wet Tropics, incorporating the customary lands of some twenty rainforest tribal groups. (This number includes two groups whose majority of Country is customarily seen as not rainforest; however parts of their Country, and their association, is rainforest and the Wet Tropics bio-region.) These twenty groups' customary lands include Indigenous land titles, land subject to further claims, freehold and leased farmlands generally owned by non-Indigenous landholders. The area covers some 28,448.3 km², stretching from *Kalkajaka* (Black Mountain) near Cooktown in the north, west to Mt Garnet, and south to Paluma (outlined figuratively in Figure 2). This region is home to 20,000 RAP, 120 clans within eight language family groups, 80 legal entities including Registered Native Title Prescribed Body Corporates and registered Cultural Heritage Bodies, two Aboriginal Local Government Councils and 20 tribal groups : *Northern*: Eastern Kuku Yalanji, Western Yalanji, *Central*: Djabugay, Gunggandji, Mamu, Mbabaram, Muluridji, NgadjonJii, Yidinji and Yirrganydj, and *Southern*: Bandjin, Djiru, Girramay, Gugu-Badhun, Gulnay, Jirrbal, Nwaigi, Warrgamay, Warungu and Wulugurukaba (Hill et al., 2014; RAPA, 2013).

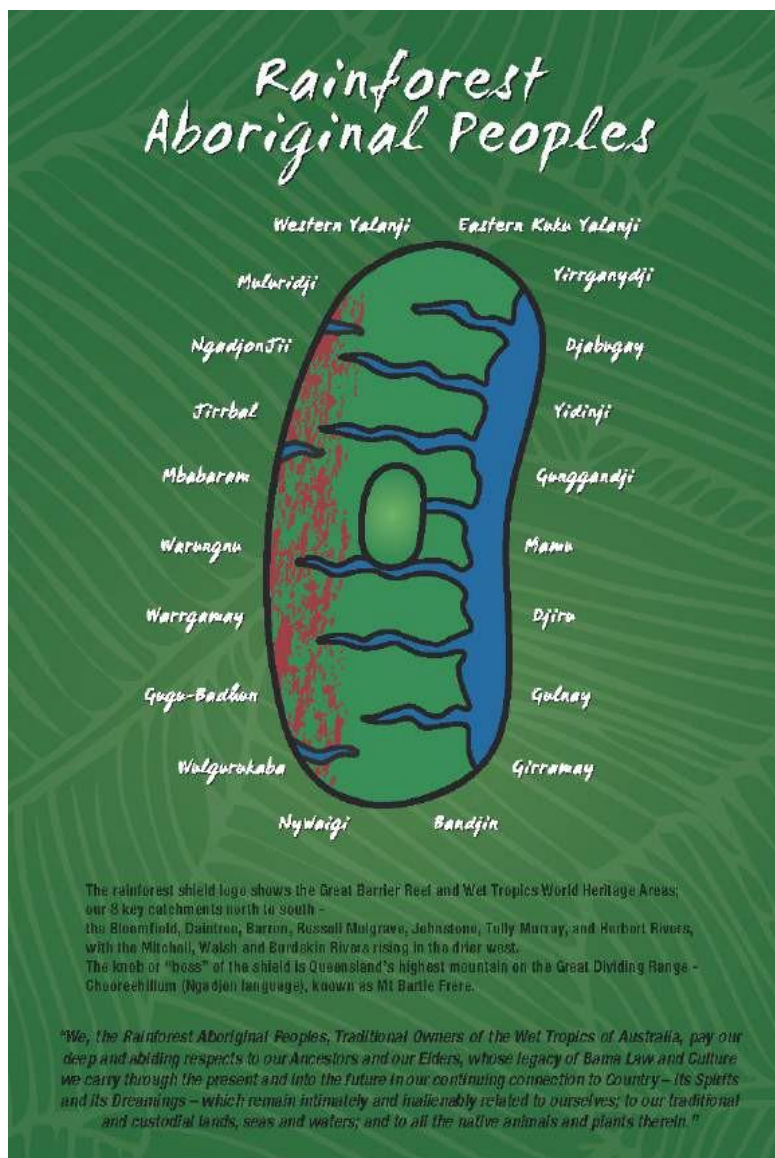


Figure 2. Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and Wet Tropics country

Source: RAPA, 2013

Rainforest Aboriginal peoples partner in their management of country with numerous government, community and industry organisations (see Figure 3): key Australian government agencies (including the Departments of Environment and of Prime Minister and Cabinet); Queensland government agencies (including the Departments of Environment and Heritage Protection, National Parks, Sport and Recreation, Department of Natural Resources and Mines); local government authorities (including Tablelands, Mareeba, Cook, Douglas, Hinchinbrook, Townsville, the Cassowary Coast and the Cairns Regional Councils and Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Councils); regional natural resource bodies (including Dry Tropics NRM, Terrain NRM and Cape York NRM); other non-government organisations (e.g., Bush Heritage, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre; and industry organisations such as the Alliance for Sustainable Tourism) (Hill et al., 2014). Other key institutions are elaborated in Maclean et al. (2012).

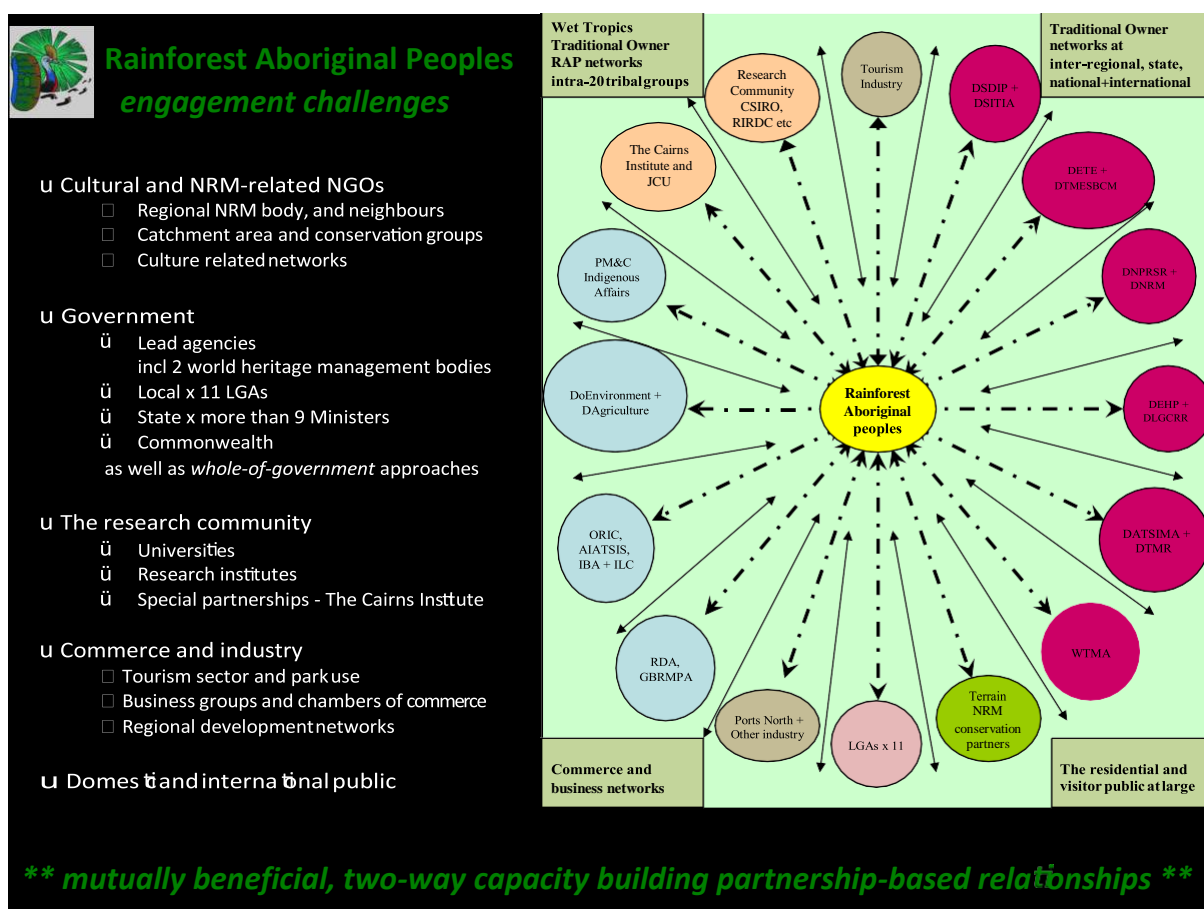


Figure 3. A RAP view of key institutional relationships in the Wet Tropics region

Source: RAPA, 2013

1.1 A History of Indigenous-led Management of the Wet Tropics Region

The Wet Tropics region has exceptional environmental value and economic importance (McDonald & Weston, 2004). It contains the richest biological diversity in Australia and is recognised as one of the mega-diverse regions of the world (Williams et al., 2001). The region is incredibly rich in biological and cultural terms, even though it occupies less than 1% of Queensland (Goosem, Morgan & Kemp, 1999). Because of its unique biological significance in global terms, 48% of rainforest in the region was granted World Heritage status in 1988. Remembering, however, that as the Wet Tropics region is also home of 20 tribal groups and 20,000 Traditional Owners (Hill et al., 2013), the fundamental link between human habitation and culture and the biological uniqueness of the region was over-looked, even though more two hundred generations of Traditional Owners have helped to shape Wet Tropics landscapes through their use of fire (Hill, Griggs & Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku Incorporated, 2000; Hill et al., 2004) and other practices (e.g., Hill & Baird, 2003; Horsfall, 1987).

The outstanding universal significance of the natural values of the Wet Tropics was recognised by the listing of some 9,027 km² as the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in 1988. This recognition of the global significance of the traditional lands of RAP for its *natural values only* has long been contentious. On the one hand, many RAP appreciated the protection world heritage listing afforded the natural and cultural values of the region. At the same time, however, the listing has equally been contested by peoples who seek recognition of the global significance of their Indigenous cultural values (Dale, Lane, Yarrow & Bigelow, 2000; Hill et al., 2014; Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2005). Either way, the 1988 action started what has become a more than 30 year struggle for RAP to seek international recognition of their role in the shaping of the region's biological values and indeed recognition of the region's cultural values in their own right.

The marginalisation of RAP in the original listing was institutionalised through the original governance structures of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA), the statutory authority established to manage the region's listed biological values. The Authority was to manage the 900,000 hectare area under the Commonwealth's *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983* and the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*. While there was a mix of both regional and southern members on the newly formed Authority Board, it effectively drew its powers from the southern-based Ministerial Council. Also, the new Authority was a biologically-oriented institution that was originally made up of an enclave of professional staff out-posted to a northern Queensland town (see Dale, 2014). Adding to this problem was the fact that the vast majority of day to day management of the Wet Tropics estate was vested in the regionally-based Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS); at that time, a Queensland government agency with little interest in WTMA or in cooperative approaches to protected area management.

In its early days, the Authority, while well intentioned, had no Indigenous representation on the Board and no Indigenous staff members. A small Indigenous engagement unit was, however, established to help open discussions about co-management of the Wet Tropics Queensland World Heritage Area (WTQWHA). This unit commenced dialogue with the newly formed Rainforest Aboriginal Network (RAN, 1992-1994); a loose network of Traditional Owners focused on the recognition of RAP rights and interests. This group, with support of Marcus Lane of Griffith University and through effective summits of Traditional Owners from across the region, developed a clear policy mandate with respect to joint management aspirations and issues for the region (Lane, 1993). The Authority responded positively by commissioning Allan Dale (then also of Griffith University) to

help it develop a more cohesive policy response/position on the issue. Both processes inter-twined and guided informal negotiations between RAN and the Authority; even though major tensions between WTMA and QPWS remained.

These initial processes perhaps illustrated the lack of formal policy or basic institutional foundations for Traditional Owner involvement in World Heritage Area (WHA) management at all scales, eventually sparking WTMA to undertake a much more comprehensive review of the involvement of RAP in the management of the region. Wide terms of reference were negotiated with RAN and the Authority's Indigenous Engagement Unit undertook the work, including several sub-consultancies. Items 12A and 12B under the Terms of Reference were focused on looking at how Indigenous people could secure a more equitable level of involvement in management of the WHA. The resultant report (Dale, Johnstone, Baker & Yarrow, 1997a; 1997b) recommended the establishment of formal and durable negotiation structures between the Commonwealth, the state government and Traditional Owners; paving the way for a stable regional agreement regarding the long term cooperative management of the region.

Through these formal approaches, a higher level Regional Agreement (WTMA, 2005) was established (aka *the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement*), and a formal Wet Tropics Indigenous Advisory Committee set up; the Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAAC, 2005-2008). Sitting behind this, the region's emerging natural resource body (FNQ NRM Ltd, later renamed Terrain NRM) began to formalise support for RAP to develop a broader and self-determined Indigenous development plan focused on cultural and natural resource management (aka *the Aboriginal Plan* or *the Bama Plan*). This work was led by FNQ NRM Ltd's Traditional Owner Advisory Committee (TOAC, 2005-2008). Strong integration between the efforts of TOAC and RAAC ensured alignment between the *Regional Agreement* and the *Bama Plan*. Indeed, both documents were signed and launched by Ministers Greg Hunt (Federal) and Desley Boyle (Queensland) in a significant Traditional Owners and Wet Tropics region ceremony at Warrina Lakes in Innisfail in 2005. In theory and combined, the *Regional Agreement* and the *Bama Plan* could have established a very stable, progressive framework for movement toward Indigenous-led management of the WTQWHA and the wider Wet Tropics NRM region.

In addition to the above processes, several concurrent but linked processes were also progressing; laying the foundation for specifically identifying, defining and securing Indigenous rights and interests right across the WHA and the wider Wet Tropics region. Indeed, these largely statutory processes have themselves contributed to a range of stable, longer term outcomes that have been progressively improving Indigenous ownership, access and involvement in the management of country since the 1980s. Hill et al. (2014) noted that these have included:

- The granting of Aboriginal freehold and other tenure forms under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* and the negotiation of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) as binding agreements between native title claimants/holders and the other managers/users;
- Land claims under the Queensland *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*;
- The emerging concept of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), a voluntary agreement between Traditional Owners and the Australian government to promote biodiversity and cultural resource conservation on Indigenous-owned lands; and

- The establishment of a variety of Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger programs and other arrangements (Maclean et al., 2012; Maclean, Cuthill & Ross, 2013; Pert et al., 2015).

Within this wider historical context (synthesised in Figure 4), and as a key integrating strategy aimed at gaining recognition of the traditional uses and cultural values of the WTQWHA, RAP decided in 2005 to progress National Heritage listing of the World Heritage Area for its cultural values (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2005). RAP based this decision on a recommendation made in the previous *Which way our cultural survival* report, compiled in 1998 (Review Steering Committee, 1998). Throughout these later processes, the RAP aspiration for the relisting of the WTQWHA for its cultural values and the National Heritage listing of the region's cultural values were well articulated. Through the directions set in the *Bama Plan*, FNQ NRM Ltd was able to secure considerable resources to substantively progress the National Heritage listing objective. This work was largely progressed in partnership between the newly formed Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC, 2005–2008) with support from researcher advocates within both CSIRO and James Cook University (JCU).

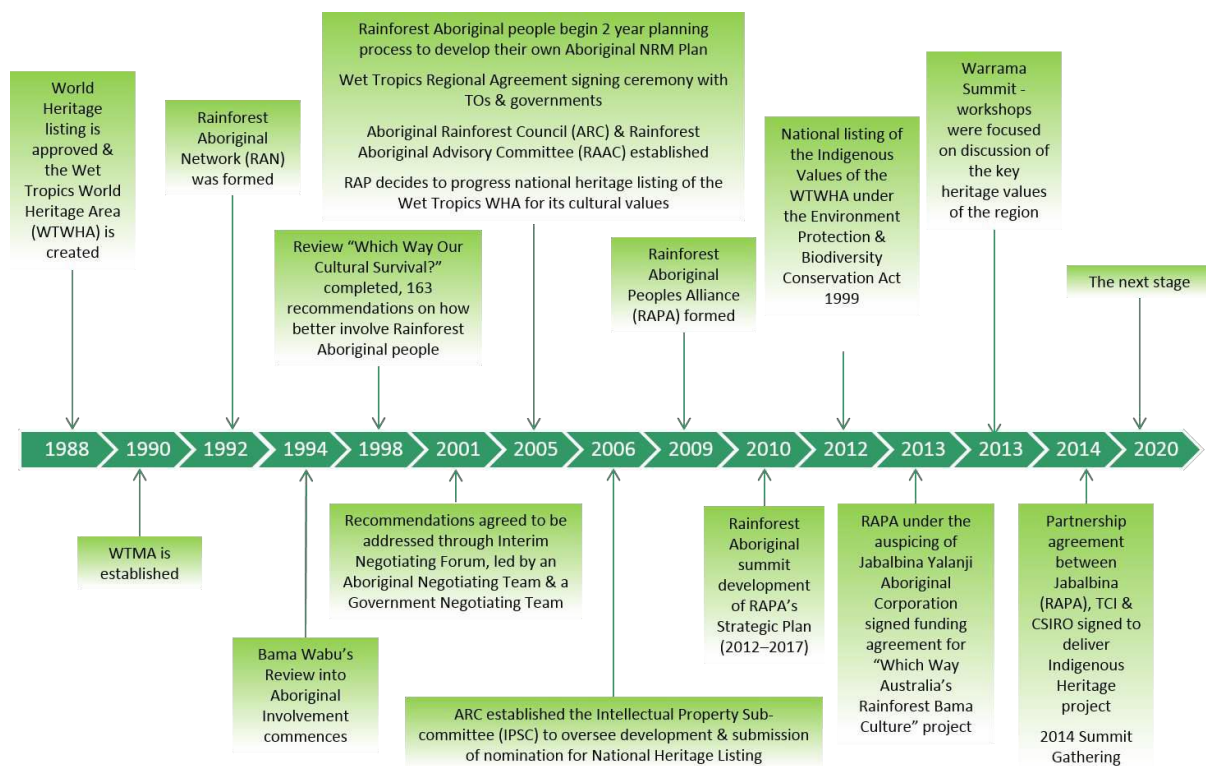


Figure 4. A timeline of key events related to the interests of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples in relation to the management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area to 2015. Note that additional Traditional Owner summits were held in 2017 and 2018.

In December 2012, the consequent national listing of the Indigenous Values of the WTQWHA under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth) gave new impetus to the original larger goal of World Heritage relisting (Hill et al., 2014). This '*Which Way Australia's Rainforest Aboriginal Culture: Indigenous Heritage Program?*' Project represented the key next step in progressing Indigenous-led management of the regional nationally-significant cultural values and the relisting of the World Heritage Area for its cultural values; a significant testament to the tenacity and persistence of the RAP leadership over the last 30 plus years and the strength of

aspirations for Indigenous management of country and specifically its internationally significant cultural values.

1.2 Aboriginal Aspirations for Management of the World Heritage Area

Rainforest Aboriginal peoples have maintained a great interest in keeping their traditional uses and cultural values alive and have, since the listing of the WTQWHA in 1988, negotiated improved cultural and natural resource management outcomes with governments and other regional agencies through the *Regional Agreement* and the *Bama Plan* processes (Wet Tropics Management Authority, no date). These Indigenous-led aspirations have been extensively developed and are best reviewed and detailed in the context of those two seminal documents. The following subsections outline the key aspirations identified and promulgated through both processes.

The Wet Tropics Regional Agreement

The *Regional Agreement*, signed in April 2005, provided for the cooperative management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area by the Australian and Queensland governments and RAP. As part of the agreement, the Australian and Queensland governments “acknowledged Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ aspirations, cultural values, spiritual links and obligations to the land and the waters of the Wet Tropics area.” (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2005, p.ii). RAP also acknowledged WTMA’s statutory responsibilities to develop the Wet Tropics World Heritage Plan and to manage the WTQWHA. The agreement, including a consequent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), had no impact on Native Title (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2005, p. 9).

The *Regional Agreement* recognised the region as a living cultural landscape with potential for listing on the National Heritage List and World Heritage list for its cultural values (WTMA, 2005, p. 1). The principles and guidelines articulated in the agreement provided the basis for cooperative management of the WTQWHA and encompassed a number of agreed activities and processes where genuine engagement was required for management of WTQWHA. These included:

- Policy development;
- Strategic planning;
- Park planning;
- Permitting;
- Operational management;
- Monitoring and reporting; and
- Cultural heritage management.

A series of protocols were developed that provided a framework to ensure RAP involvement and input into policy, planning and hands-on management. Importantly, the terms of the agreement included an annual regional workshop to measure its success (WTMA, 2005, pp. 3-7). Further, the key elements of the *Regional Agreement* centred around four major components (WTMA, 2005, pp. 9-10):

- **Recognition of Cultural Values:** In this context, progressing a nomination for re-listing of the Rainforest Aboriginal Cultural Values for the WTQWHA was strongly recommended;

- **Participation in Decision Making:** Legislation was to be amended so that it would be a requirement for RAP representative to sit on WTMA Board of Directors;
- **Establishment of an Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC):** It was intended that ARC only speak on country matters when given permission from the specific RAP of that country;
- **Participation in Policy, Planning, Permitting and Management:** A range of protocols and operational procedures described how RAP would participate in management activities.

Within the MoU WTMA, the Queensland Government Environment Protection Authority/Queensland Parks & Wildlife, the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNR&M) and the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) agreed a number of things, including the development of a positive working relationship with the emerging ARC to realise economic and social benefits for RAP, to consult RAP on issues relating to land management and cultural heritage, and to acknowledge RAP as the first point of call for involvement in WHA management. The formation of the ARC was intended to support RAP in a number of ways, including by representing the views of RAP at WTMA Board meetings, and advising on WTMA policies (WTMA, 2005, pp. 19- 20). In the view of RAP, however, there was often insufficient recognition of RAP cultural authority and the fact that Aboriginal people had been living and managing the land and waters of the Rainforest for millennium.

The Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management (Aboriginal, or Bama) Plan

As part of the Wet Tropics regional NRM planning process and the regional arrangements for the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), the *Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan* (Aboriginal Plan) was developed over a three year period (2002-2005). The *Aboriginal (or Bama) Plan* was developed by Traditional Owners of the Wet Tropics NRM region and the Wet Tropics Aboriginal Plan Project Team (WTAPPT). Support was also received from the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), FNQ NRM Ltd and numerous people in a variety of non-government and government organisations (Traditional Owners, FNQ NRM Ltd, Reef and Rainforest CRC, 2005). It was considered at the time that, in contrast to the regional scale of NRM planning concepts, often the responsibilities and connections that Traditional Owners have for Country are predominantly in operation at a local scale. The region's Traditional Owners were hence proactive in ensuring that their priorities and environmental concerns were identified in the *Caring for country and culture - The Wet Tropics Aboriginal cultural and natural resource management plan* (Traditional Owners, FNQ NRM Ltd, Reef and Rainforest CRC, 2005).

The *Aboriginal, or Bama, Plan* involved a very cohesive process of engagement and consensus building among Traditional Owners. The key outcome of the process was the identification of a number of strategies and actions to address the issues and aspirations that Traditional Owners had identified regarding natural and cultural resource management concerning Country and culture. The *Aboriginal, or Bama, Plan* also identified that a regionally coordinated (or collective action) approach and commitment from a variety of Indigenous, government and non-government organisations was required. Each action identified potential partners. Importantly, the *Bama Plan* process gave the region's Traditional Owners the opportunity to formulate their shared vision for country and built a shared vision to promote and protect country (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key strategies and actions in the Aboriginal, or Bama, Plan

Strategy Number	Aboriginal Plan Strategies and Actions	No. Of Actions
Strategies and Actions for Increased Access and Use of Country		
1	Each traditional owner group to have agreements with relevant stakeholders regarding access to and use of country	8
Strategies and Actions for Aboriginal Knowledge of Country		
2	Develop mechanisms for the protection of Aboriginal intellectual and cultural property	6
3	Develop and implement programs and projects that document knowledge and facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices	3
Strategies and Actions for Places of Cultural Significance		
4	Increase involvement of Aboriginal people in managing places of cultural significance	5
5	Ensure protection of Aboriginal cultural landscapes and culturally significant places in policy, planning and management arrangements	9
6	Re-list the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as a World Heritage cultural landscape	2
Strategies and Actions for Aboriginal Material Culture		
7	Repatriate and appropriately manage Aboriginal material culture	7
Strategies and Actions for Aboriginal Languages		
8	Determine the current state of Aboriginal languages in the region	5
9	Develop and implement Aboriginal language programs	3
10	Increase awareness of Aboriginal languages.	3
Strategies and Actions for Plants and Animals		
11	Document traditional knowledge of plants and animals (culturally appropriate)	3
12	Increase the level of involvement of Aboriginal people in the management of weeds and feral animals	6
13	Increase the level of involvement of traditional owners in all levels of research, policy, planning and management arrangements for plants and animals	6
14	Increase employment opportunities for traditional owners in the management of plants and animals	3
Strategies and Actions for Hunting, Gathering and Cultural Maintenance		
15	Increase the awareness of NRM stakeholders and the broader community about Aboriginal resource use	1
16	Traditional owners' values and priorities for using resources are identified and protected	6
Strategies and Actions for Water Resources		
17	Increase recognition and protection of traditional owners' values for waterways	4

18	Increase the involvement of traditional owners in research, planning and management of waterways	3
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Strategies and Actions for Forestry

19	Increase the capacity of traditional owners to develop and implement successful forestry initiatives	9
20	Protect traditional owners' knowledge of traditionally-used plants including technologies and access to these resources	2

Strategies and Actions for Tourism

21	Increase the involvement of traditional owners in the tourism industry	8
22	Resource and support the development of traditional owner tourism businesses	6
23	Ensure that the intellectual and cultural property rights of traditional owners are recognised by the tourism industry	6

Strategies and Actions for Fisheries and Aquaculture

24	Increase the involvement of traditional owners in all levels of the commercial fishing industry and aquaculture enterprises	6
25	Develop Aboriginal fisheries and aquaculture enterprises	4

Strategies and Actions for Making the Aboriginal Plan Work

26	Ensure all traditional owner groups have strong and effective governance structures for land and sea management	3
27	Achieve 10% staffing of Aboriginal people in NRM and cultural heritage management	7
28	Develop and implement country-based and community management plans for land and sea country for traditional owner groups	2
29	Develop a cultural landscape mapping program to document the range of Aboriginal values at a local and regional scale	5
30	Develop and implement cultural education programs and educational materials for NRM stakeholders about traditional owners values and issues for caring for country	2
31	Develop and implement culturally-appropriate mechanisms to ensure traditional owners' values and interests incorporated into policy, planning and management	3
32	Develop and implement culturally-appropriate training packages for Aboriginal people in cultural and natural resource management	2
33	Attract funding and resources for the implementation of the Aboriginal Plan	1
34	Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation strategy for the Wet Tropics Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan	5

Progress in Achieving Management Aspirations post Aboriginal, or Bama, Plan and Regional Agreement

Already by 2005, there were clear signs that the resolve of both the Australian and Queensland governments to make a determined attempt to implement the *Regional Agreement* process was unfolding. Despite its strong commitment, WTMA itself was also struggling with limited resources, and there was a clear retreat from the State in regard to keeping a cohesive, collaborative and regionally-based approach. The State embarked on a strategy to focus its co-management approach on working directly with Traditional Owners at the local (national park) level, through cooperative management groups. This lack of sustained cross-governmental, WT regional level commitment left ARC under-resourced, exacerbating governance problems.

A revised and substantive attempt to regroup and coordinate a regionally-focused Indigenous-led management agenda was progressed via extensive work, supported by Terrain NRM. This effort was focused on supporting the development of Country-based plans and investing in their implementation. At the regional scale, effort was focused on the development of a Regional Partnership Agreement specifically aimed at securing a regional governance capacity and coordinating a long term approach to implementation of the *Regional Agreement* and *Aboriginal, or Bama Plan*. This Regional Partnership Agreement would have secured and funded a core regional and long term framework for supporting Traditional Owners at all scales in progressing their aspirations.

This Regional Partnership Agreement approach was supported by ARC, RAAC and Terrain's Traditional Owner Advisory Committee (TOAC) and fully engaged the commitment of both Queensland and Australian Government agencies. The Agreement had been fully negotiated by mid-2007, but collapsed with a major policy change announced by the incoming Federal Labor Government in 2007. In effect, the incoming Australian Government abandoned the Regional Partnership Agreement approach. Despite their disappointment and since that time, however, Traditional Owners have continued to battle on via work with their key partners to secure continuing but more flexible arrangements which would enable them to progress their management aspirations. These key activities have included:

- The emergence of the Rainforest Aboriginal People's Alliance (RAPA, 2009-2015), with quorum constituted by the key sub-regional organisations;
- Strong development and progression of sub-regional and local Traditional Owner institutions;
- The development and funding of three Indigenous Protected Area agreements within the WT region, and associated Working on Country funding programs;
- The progression of region-wide Indigenous roundtable negotiations supported by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA, now DATSIP); and
- Signing of The Cairns Institute (TCI) Partnership Agreement, and development of the successful Indigenous Heritage Project submission.

The National Heritage listing in 2012 was a major regional achievement and sparked a major policy and programming response from RAPA. Once put to the Minister, this response became *Project 2020* (2013); an Indigenous-led policy approach that informed progression of this ‘Which Way Australia’s Rainforest Aboriginal Culture: Indigenous Heritage Program?’ Cultural Values Project (2012-2015) and a subsequent Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) submission (2014/5) to the Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This current Indigenous Heritage Program Project, developed by RAPA and supported through the TCI Partnership Agreement, enabled RAP to revisit the opportunity to take a regional and cohesive approach to securing their cultural heritage management aspirations across the Wet Tropics. Hence, this discussion paper has two aims in mind. First, to provide the context (i.e., the history, of ‘where we have come from’) and second, to explore how to best support management of the region’s national cultural heritage values and to further progress the process of relisting of the Wet Tropics WHA for its outstanding cultural values (i.e., ‘where to from here’). With the proposed relisting of the WTQWHA, (i.e., the inclusion of its outstanding cultural values in addition to the natural values on the World Heritage List), RAP are expecting tangible outcomes such as recognition of rights embedded in the World Heritage Area planning, management and policy and practical social and economic outcomes through employment and business opportunities.

1.3 Current World Heritage Management Arrangements

Understanding the current management context of Indigenous-led management of internationally significant cultural heritage values requires some overview of the current World Heritage management arrangements in the Wet Tropics. The currently listed, biologically-focused world heritage values are broadly overseen by a Ministerial Council comprising both Federal and State environment ministers. As mentioned above, the legislative head of power for management is encompassed with the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Protection and Management Act 1993*. Within the context of the Act, predominantly, the broad strategic and operational oversight of the management of the area is carried out by the WTMA Board. Key management contributions of the Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority include the fact that the Board:

- Sets direction through the Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2013) and implements the Wet Tropics Management Plan (Queensland Government, 2009) including managing developments to protect the values (the 1998 Plan is being reviewed in 2017);
- Provides Australian and Queensland Government-attuned decision making, with Board members appointed by relevant governments through Cabinet decisions and with senior Australian and Queensland public servants being present at all meetings;
- Provides regionally-astute decision making, with most Board members living in and having strong professional networks within the region. The Board appoints and/or receives advice of the Community Consultative Committee, the Conservation Sector Liaison Group (currently expired), and a Tourism Network;
- Provides Rainforest Aboriginal-attuned decision making, with two Board members being Rainforest Aboriginal people, and an observer from the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples’ Alliance also being present at all meetings (to 2015); and
- Provides sectoral-astute decision making, with Board members being historically associated with local government, science, tourism, landholder and environment sectors in the region.

After a very extensive delay, the State and Federal governments have only just renewed the appointment of most members pending the outcomes of a review of World Heritage management across Queensland. Consequently, the Board is currently still not able to form a quorum or make decisions. An effective WTMA Board is required to properly implement the Authority's legislative responsibilities and to advance its Strategic Plan (2013-2018). The Board had not been able to meet since the current World Heritage Management Plan was adopted, leaving key gaps against strategic goals, including: (i) protecting outstanding universal values by re-assessing Board priorities in terms of the recent evaluation of WTMA's global irreplaceability; (ii) progressing the aspirations and key roles of RAP, particularly via the development of a National Heritage Listing Action Plan; and (iii) the resumption of key community roles, including the appointment of advisory committees and their chairs and continuing region-wide outreach and engagement activities.

It is particularly important to note that top-level strategic direction is needed to ensure Rainforest Aboriginal people's leadership and coordination is in place with respect to governments advancing national and world heritage recognition. Federal Environment Minister Hunt's suggestion (made in 2015 to a CSIRO-led co-management delegation) of a National Heritage Listing Action Plan being developed by Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and partnered by WTMA and the Australian and Queensland Governments, would be a big step in bringing together the multiple parties and current initiatives into an agreed forward pathway.

Whatever pathway is eventually negotiated, much more needs to be done to advance RAP aspirations for securing more flexible arrangements for progressing Indigenous-led management aspirations and activities for the whole of the Wet Tropics. There is significant RAP disappointment about the lack of meaningful progress to date. Further negotiation progress now substantially rests with the new Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) established by WTMA. TOLG aims to provide strong leadership on behalf of the RAP and it will need to be resourced appropriately to enable real advancement that will enable benefits to flow back to the Rainforest communities.

2. Methods

Within the context of the wider ‘Which Way Australia’s Rainforest Aboriginal Culture: Indigenous Heritage Program?’ Cultural Values Project, this discussion paper was developed through the Managing Cultural Values Working Group. As such, it complements the efforts of the Valuing the Cultural Values Working Group and the Relisting the Cultural Values for World Heritage Working Group (see Figure 1 with regard to these relations between Working Groups). The working group comprised key RAP members, CSIRO and Cairns Institute operatives. As a working group, we based this discussion paper on a review of past documents, outcomes from the *Warrama* Summit (November 2013 celebration on the Atherton Tablelands of National Heritage Listing of our Indigenous cultural values), the *Booran* Gathering (December 2014) and feedback from four Indigenous engagement contractors operating throughout the region from September to December 2014. A network meeting of critical government and non-government agencies supportive of RAP also contributed input. Finally, this paper was also informed by informal inputs from other key regional participants and informants, including RAP members, government officials and researchers with expertise in heritage planning.

The Steering Committee and Working Group reviewed several critical documents of relevance, including related reports published on the Australian Government website, published research papers, workshop reports and summaries, and other grey literature we were able to access. At the *Warrama* Summit itself, two CSIRO presentations: *Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples’ country: Our cultural values – from National to World Heritage Listing* (Talbot, Hill & Bohnet, 2013, Appendix 1) and *Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples’ country: Protecting and managing Indigenous cultural values* (Bohnet & Hill, 2013) provided the context for RAP to talk about Bama-led management of their cultural values and how to best protect and maintain these values. The outcomes from this conversation as well as discussions with key informants informed this discussion paper.

The results from our analyses of the review and a broad range of documents and wider engagement are detailed within this paper, and outcomes from the *Warrama* Summit are detailed in *Relisting of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area for cultural values* (RAPA, 2013b) and the *Booran* Gathering (RAPA, 2015a and 2015b). This enabled us to use this emerging discussion paper to:

- ② Discuss key concepts and ideas within the Managing Values Working Group;
- ② Further tease out ideas within the Project Steering Committee; and
- ② Further develop these concepts through a targeted workshop of key government and not-for-profit agencies with a key stake in Indigenous-led management of World Heritage values.

Consequently, the following section of this document provides important background to key components of the proposed management system and how they may operate at various scales. The final section seeks to articulate *Where to from here*; exploring key Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ views about how management of the WTQWHA could be reformed in the short term and over time to deliver Indigenous-led outcomes and an effective form of management for Indigenous cultural values.

With respect to the co-management parts of this paper, we have integrated the work of Hill et al. (2014) which has involved a participatory evaluation of co-management in the Wet Tropics, with a focus on Rainforest Aboriginal people. The participatory evaluation approaches applied with all Rainforest Aboriginal groups involved in the co-design approach were developed in partnerships that ensured these followed appropriate cultural protocols.

The evaluation was conducted over three and a half years (mid 2011-2014), preceded by a two-year scoping phase using a participatory co-research approach (Cullen-Unsworth, Butler, Hill & Wallace, 2010; Maclean & Cullen, 2009). The co-research was developed through a five stage process: 1) mutual interest identification; 2) co-research agreements with relevant organisations; 3) co-produced categories and indicators; 4) participatory evaluation through multi-scalar community-driven processes; and 5) collaborative analysis, interpretation, report-writing and theory-building. Details of the activities in each phase can be found in Pert et al. (2015) and sources cited therein. It is important to note here that the participatory processes to undertake the evaluation in the work of Hill et al. (2014) were conducted at three scales with four different groups, three with relevant RAP organisations, and one with their partners. At each of these workshops, participants were asked to rate the health of identified co-management themes and explain the reasons behind their ratings.

3. Building Aboriginal-led Management of Wet Tropics Cultural Values

Since the listing of the Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA for its outstanding natural values in 1988, RAP have been continuously negotiating to secure significant control and effective Aboriginal-led management of cultural and natural resources in the wider Wet Tropics with government agencies and other sectoral interests. While the previous section outlines the history of that struggle, RAP are currently pursuing three primary strategies to secure their aspirations. These strategies include:

- Development a clear foundation for an Indigenous-led management strategy for cultural and other aspects of the region's National Heritage listing and the proposed relisting of the World Heritage area (this Towards Indigenous-led Management discussion paper);
- Development of aligned strategies to maximise the local economic and social benefit arising from the National Heritage listing and proposed relisting of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area (refer the Valuing the Values discussion paper); and
- Considering the proposed relisting of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area for its cultural values (refer the Relisting the Cultural Values for World Heritage discussion paper).

This discussion paper relates to the key strategies for progressing Indigenous-led management of the cultural and other values for the Wet Tropics region. As National Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics for its cultural values has recently been secured, these proposed strategies should be considered as critical, even in the absence of a World Heritage relisting bid being progressed. The process for any World Heritage nomination to be considered at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee is that it should first be nominated to Australia's Tentative List for World Heritage assessment. Securing relisting would amplify the case for the proposed management arrangements being advanced.

Following broad input from the 2013 *Warrama* Summit and the 2014 *Booran* Gathering, more detailed engagement with Traditional Owner groups in the Wet Tropics and workshops of key government players, big and scale-based thematic areas of RAP interest and importance have been identified (Figure 5) as including:

1. RAP leading management of country at clan/tribal scale;
2. RAP leading management of culture/Country sub-regionally to support local scales;
3. RAP leading management of culture/Country at regional (and state, national and even international) scale to support clan/tribal local scales; and
4. Co-management of national parks and protected areas.

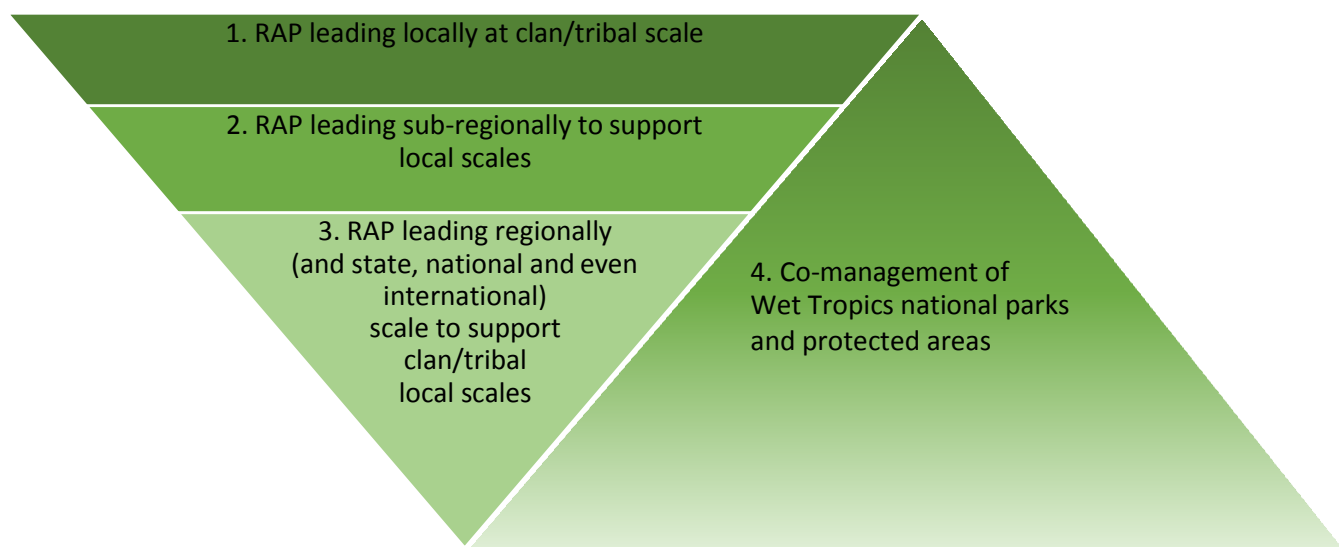


Figure 5. RAP leading management of culture and Country

Source: Schmider, 2016 (NB: Top level placement notes the critical importance of family/clan scale).

The issue of co-management of national parks and protected areas could be seamlessly integrated into sub-regional and local scale management issues but given its very specific institutional characteristics, it deserves special management attention in its own right. Bama should be able to negotiate for more than just simple co-management of a national park and protected areas, enhancing empowerment, benefits and negotiating capacity.

3.1 Management at Different Scales

Traditional Owners consider that the key to progressing their management of country and culture comes down to enabling appropriate Indigenous-led management at the different scales that make sense to Rainforest Aboriginal people. At the very least, these scales include:

- Family, clan and tribal scales—families, clans and tribes are the foundation units of social organisation among RAP. These are the scales at which the most of the critical decisions are made by RAP in determining their own futures and in managing culture and country;
- Sub-regional scales—culturally appropriate alliances of tribal groups that are self-defined and self-organised to achieve sub-regional aspirations; and
- A regional scale alliance of participating sub-regions and/or tribal groups not embedded within existing sub-regional structures. The *Booran* Gathering suggested that while there is an acceptance of the need for some jobs to be done regionally, and at state, national and international levels, the focus needs to be on providing the support needed for a more local scale. More regional discussion is needed about the most appropriate way to govern regional, state, national and international-scale activities.

There have long been very consistent aspirations expressed by RAP in the Wet Tropics on such issues, right from the earliest protests concerning the exclusion of Indigenous interests in the original listing of the Wet Tropics WHA in the 1980s (Table 2). Looking across all significant documents since that time, and based on the key interests identified at the *Warrama* Summit and *Booran* Gathering, the foundation roles articulated key by “People & Country” institutions at different scales include the following aspirations. Much of this is reflected in the 5+3 Strategic Agenda Directions to 2020 Statements (RAPA, 2015b), and the IAS funding submission (2014/5).

Table 2. Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' foundational roles and aspirations

Role Types	Family/Clan/Tribal	Sub-Regional	Regional / State / National and International
1. Building strong institutional governance and leadership.	Building strong family, clan and tribal institutions and leadership.	Building strong sub-regional institutions and leadership, and supporting other scales.	Building strong institutions and advocacy leadership, and supporting other scales.
2. Progressing strong and adaptive Country-based planning.	Owning and driving Country-based planning.	Supporting collective and individual approaches to Country-based planning.	Supporting regional Bama planning and collective negotiations and supporting country-based planning at other scales.
3. Increasing rights and access to our Country.	Strategically securing increased rights and access to country at family, clan and tribal scale.	In cooperation with Land Councils, supporting families, clans and tribes to secure increased rights and access to country at family, clan and tribal scale, particularly through sub-regional dealings.	In cooperation with Land Councils, supporting families, clans and tribes to secure increased rights and access to country at family, clan and tribal scale, particularly through regional dealings.
4. Coordinating and integrating internal engagement within and external engagement.	Coordinating and integrating internal engagement within and external engagement at family, clan and tribal scale.	Coordinating and integrating internal engagement within and external engagement at sub-regional scale and supporting improved engagement at other scales.	Coordinating and integrating internal engagement within and external engagement at regional scale and supporting improved engagement at other scales.
5. Cultural and natural heritage identification, mapping, protection, enhancement and management.	Operational planning and delivery of effective family, clan and tribal management of cultural and natural heritage.	Operational planning and delivery of sub-regional management of cultural and natural heritage and support for other scales.	Operational planning and delivery of regional management of cultural and natural heritage and support for other scales.
6. Cultural heritage clearance and keeping-place services related to externally driven development.	Operational planning and delivery of effective family, clan and tribal clearance services and keeping-places.	Operational planning and delivery of clearance and keeping-places and support for other scales.	Operational planning and delivery of regional management of clearance and keeping-places and support for other scales.
7. Internal and external interpretation, education and cultural transmission.	Strengthening culture across families, clans and tribes and increasing external engagement and understanding.	Strengthening culture across the sub-region and increasing external engagement and understanding.	Strengthening culture across the region and increasing external engagement and understanding.
8. Livelihoods and commercial enterprises based on cultural and natural assets.	Building effective livelihoods and commercial enterprises at family, clan and tribal scales.	Building effective livelihoods and commercial enterprises at sub-regional scale and supporting other scales.	Building effective livelihoods and commercial enterprises at sub-regional scale and supporting other scales.
9. Effective and equitable management of wealth earned from country.	Maximising the social and economic benefit from wealth generated from family, clan and tribal institutions and assets.	Supporting effective wealth management at sub-regional other scales.	Supporting effective wealth management at sub-regional other scales.
10. Building the services and skills of our people.	Building effective human services and skills at family, clan and tribal scales.	Building effective human services and skills at sub-regional scale and supporting other scales.	Building effective human services and skills at sub-regional scale and supporting other scales.

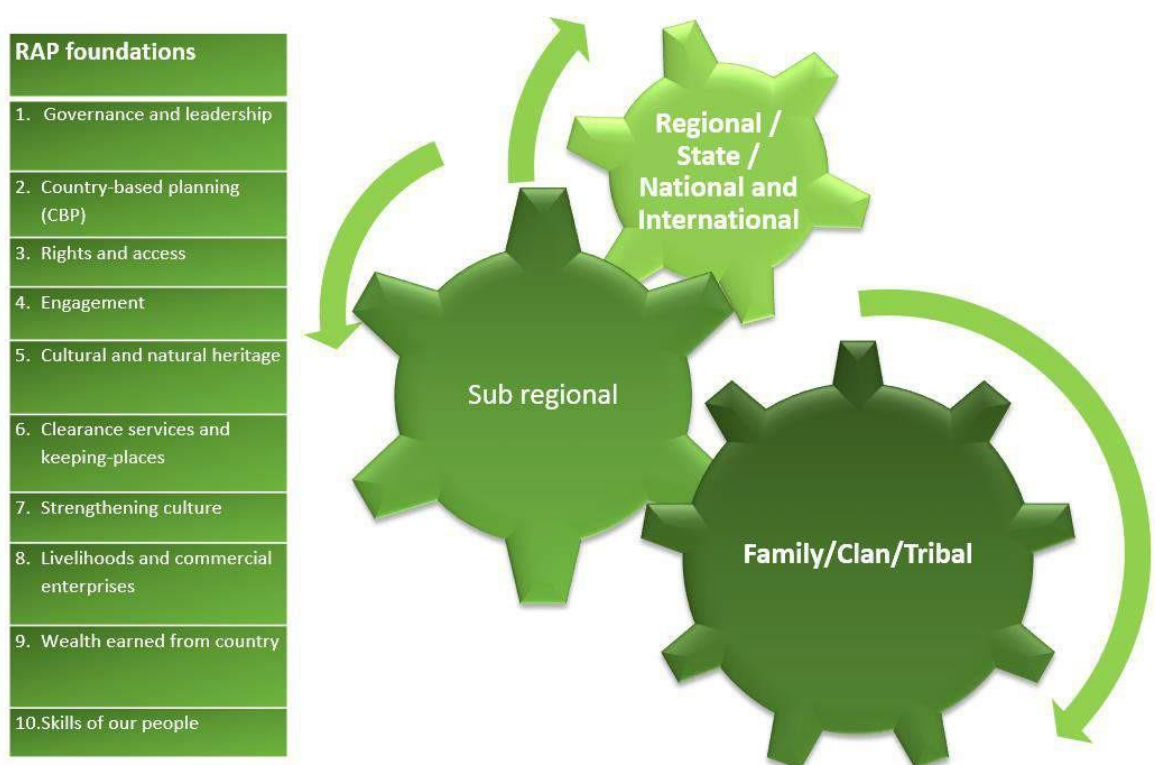


Figure 6. RAP foundational roles and aspirations

Source: Schmider, 2016

Based on the above aspirations (Table 2; Figure 6), at regional scale, it seems key strategies to support the achievement of RAP-led management include:

1. Securing an effective regional framework for the integrated regional scale brokerage of state and federal government policy and funding opportunities/programs into Traditional Owner institutions at family/clan/tribal, sub-regional and regional scales;
2. Enhancing current NRM programs such as Landcare, Working on Country (WOC) and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) to deliver long term frameworks for stable investment at family/clan/tribal level in Country-based planning and looking after Country delivery;
3. Working towards strong economic frameworks to ensure the viable family/clan/tribal, sub-regional and regional development framework, including creating specialist approaches to the brokerage of Regional Jobs Program (RJP) and other network services to building the strength of Indigenous leadership and institutions at all scales;
4. Establishing a clear knowledge network or partnership framework at regional scale to support all relevant (local to regional) Indigenous land and sea management institutions, together with critical friends (including federal and state agencies, JCU, CSIRO, WTMA, RRRC and Terrain NRM) for reviewing, monitoring and negotiating continuous improvement in the regional system of governance and leadership supporting Indigenous-led management;
5. Providing an integrated approach to supporting the governance, leadership and capacity building of Traditional Owner institutions at sub-regional and family/clan/tribal scales;
6. An ongoing, focused and continuously improving Indigenous-led plan (inclusive of National Heritage and World Heritage planning) for supporting Traditional Owners at all scales to secure their aspirations in managing land and cultural values across the Wet Tropics;

7. Supporting the formation of stable regional services for supporting Country-based planning, and cultural heritage management (mapping, protection and interpretation), science management and business development to assist the needs of family/clan/tribal institutions;
8. Reaching regional scale agreement with Aboriginal Land Councils and other key Indigenous institutions regarding how to progress the strategic and ongoing development of Indigenous rights of access to country and culture and effective native title related services; and
9. Securing relevant interregional, state, national and international developments to support family/clan/tribal needs and on-ground outcomes.

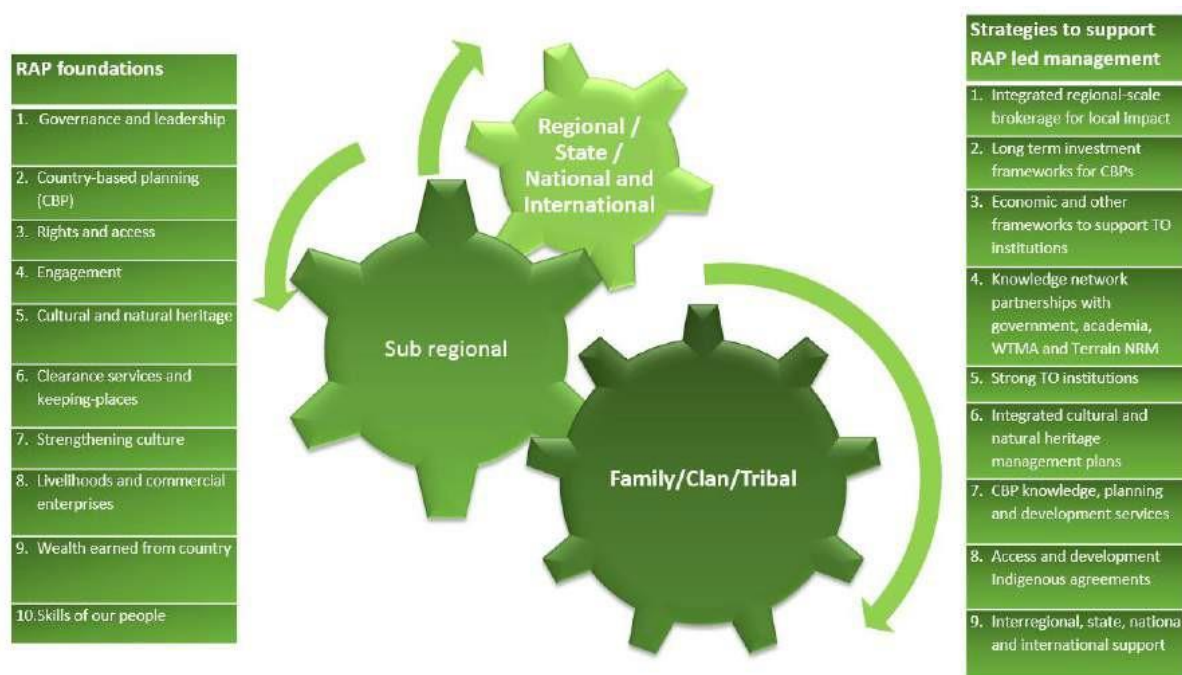


Figure 7. Key strategies supporting RAP-led management

Source: Schmider, 2016

In all of these strategies, the building of strong governance within the overall regional system for decision making and within Traditional Owner institutions will be key (Figure 7). Much recent work in this field shows institutional culture and community leadership is crucial to the success of Indigenous programs and organisations. Many Indigenous organisations are now successfully managing a broad range of programs and services for their communities, and a number of relevant papers recognise the need for culturally appropriate practices in community development approaches. These approaches should incorporate local knowledge and acknowledge healthy family and community ties, as well as land-based relationships, as being central to Aboriginal culture.

3.2 Co-management of National Parks and Protected Areas

Rainforest Aboriginal peoples in the Australian Wet Tropics (Queensland) have actively and collectively asserted their right to manage their traditional estates according to their culture since the 1980s (RAPA, 2013). This discussion paper synthesises and summarises the work of Hill et al. (2014) in regard to the outcomes of a co-research project to evaluate the partnerships that Rainforest Aboriginal peoples have with their government and non-government counterparts to co-manage and protect terrestrial biodiversity on these estates. Hill et al. (2014) interrogated the capability of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and other collaborative planning models and mechanisms, to provide the means for recognition of Indigenous knowledge and values, and joint management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area between governments and Rainforest Aboriginal people, in partnership with communities.

The evaluation was conducted over three and a half years (mid 2011-2014). It involved Rainforest Aboriginal peoples, social scientists, spatial analysts and the government and non-government environmental organisations involved in co-management in the region. A participatory co-research approach was used to develop and conduct the evaluation. The co-research occurred through a five stage process: 1) the identification of mutual interests between all those who chose to be involved in the research; 2) the development of co-research agreements with relevant organisations; 3) development and refinement of a co-management evaluation framework; 4) evaluation of the co-management partnerships (using the framework) conducted via participatory workshops at three scales; and 5) collaborative analysis, interpretation, report-writing and theory-building.

The participatory framework developed for the evaluation included two major categories for co-management: “Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Keeping Strong” and “Keeping Engagement Strong”. These categories recognised that effective engagement by Aboriginal people with their partners in co-management requires that their cultures are thriving and their own knowledge systems alive and expressed in ongoing practices on Country.

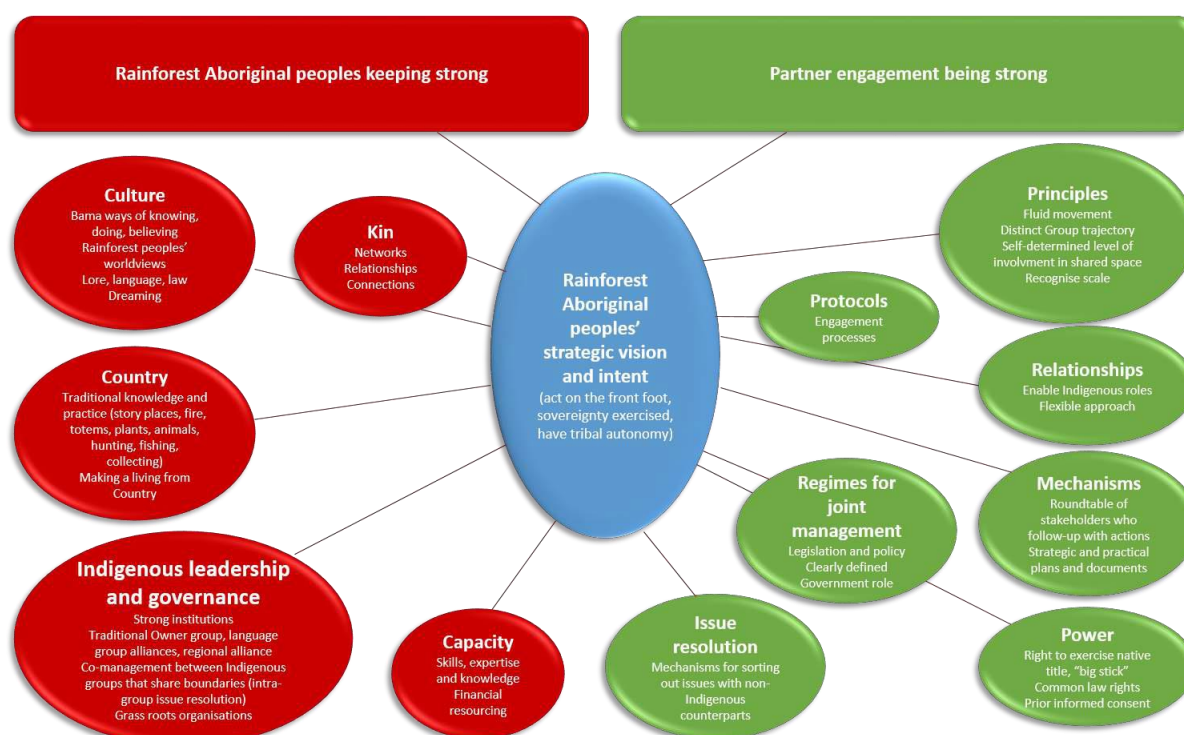


Figure 8. RAP co-management

Adapted from Hill et al (2013), p. 6.

The report considered that responsibility for the institutions for “Keeping Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Strong” lies within the Indigenous domain, whereas responsibility for the institutions for “Keeping Engagement Strong” is shared; separate evaluation metrics are therefore required. Six themes were used as indicators for “Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Keeping Strong”: culture; kin; country; Indigenous governance and leadership; capacity; and strategic vision and intent. Seven themes were used as indicators for “Keeping Engagement Strong”: protocols, principles, mechanisms, regimes, power, relationships and issue-resolution. A traffic light system was used assign the ‘health’ rating to each theme, according to these three components: structures, processes and results. Qualitative data on the reasons behind the ratings, associated policy gaps, were also collected and analysed.

All evaluations identified “Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Keeping Strong” as having better ‘health’ than that of “Keeping Engagement Strong”. This finding from the evaluation reflects the extraordinary commitment of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples to maintaining their customary lore, culture and unique knowledge systems throughout the colonial era, and their current efforts to strengthen and renew application of their knowledge, practices and values on country. The overall ratings by the partners for both their support for “Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Keeping Strong”, and for “Keeping Engagement Strong”, were notably poorer than those conducted with all Rainforest Aboriginal groups across scales. This perception of poor health by the partners reflects two drivers: 1) frustration that the government and non-government organisational processes do not respond as well as they could; and 2) recognition that rating across the region is challenged by the heterogeneity across various sub-regions within the Wet Tropics WHA.

IPAs together with Indigenous Ranger groups and support programs were hence identified as being highly effective mechanisms due to their capacity to be adaptive and collaborative, to provide a context that supports wider recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights and responsibilities, and ongoing reconciliation in Australian communities. Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) were also identified as a vitally important mechanism. Their extent is much greater than IPAs, and they are currently the only mechanism available for many groups; however, the current processes and outcomes for ILUAs are highly problematic. Static agreements and conflictual/contested positioning over negotiations do not provide for adaptive, collaborative management.

A **collaborative or network-based governance** approach, rather than a focus on specific and detailed aspects of co-management, was recognised as the best overall strategy to further partnerships for co-management in the region. However, both Indigenous and their partners' governance of Wet Tropics country is currently underdeveloped (some groups have very good governance, but overall it is patchy across the Wet Tropics). Five policy-relevant findings/gaps in current co-management arrangements that could improve recognition/management of Indigenous knowledge and values in Wet Tropics country were identified:

1. Transformative knowledge network/s to support co-governance;
2. Value-added Indigenous Protected Areas and rangers across the region;
3. Value-added Indigenous Land Use Agreements;
4. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities between native title corporations, local governments and associated ILUAs; and
5. Better understanding of the delivery of multiple benefits.

The details of the proposals in each of these areas can be found in Hill et al. (2014). They do not constitute recommendations that are endorsed by any of the organisations or individuals who came together on the co-research team. Rather, they are ideas developed through structured enquiry and they will also help inform Aboriginal decision making in the Wet Tropics in relation to the relisting and management of the Wet Tropics for its cultural values. In order to better consider the strengths and weaknesses of the policy-relevant findings and options, a joint workshop was held in September 2014, after which policy briefs and findings from the project were finalised.

3.3 Towards an Integrated and Multi-Scalar Management Framework

The key to Traditional Owners securing RAP aspirations that ensure strong and continuously improving management of cultural values of the Wet Tropics is being clear about strong governance arrangements and leadership at all three family/clan/tribal, sub-regional and regional scales. This does, however, rely on getting the foundations right at regional scale. Traditional Owners have faced a long 30 year hard struggle in securing long term and stable commitment from all relevant agencies to partnering with their aspirations. In this context, the key institutional partnerships need to be stable and focused on continuous improvement.

Hence, the key features of any Indigenous-led management regime need to include:

- Dedicated World Heritage Ministerial Forum reporting arrangements, ensuring a long term and durable institutional framework committed across both federal and state governments;
- A long term strategic focus, perhaps focusing on the wider system of governance for RAP-led management and the management of cultural values providing the context for an Indigenous-led regional planning framework that includes co-design of policies and plans;
- The development of a clear and unambiguous plan for managing the National Heritage listing values for the Wet Tropics region;
- RAP consideration of the value and consequent process for World Heritage relisting;
- A stable long term investment stream combining core Commonwealth/State commitment and some form of end user-driven investment in managing cultural values;
- A clear partnership framework between three key sets of actors: i) RAP, through some form of strong and enduring Indigenous led institution; ii) Key Commonwealth, State and non-government organisation (NGO) sector partners, primarily involving a lead from the Commonwealth, the State and NRMs (Terrain); and iii) a JCU / CSIRO / research sector partnership or alliance focused on supporting the development and monitoring of shared governance system, benchmarking the health of this system across the partnership and with respect to the core governance of the Indigenous-led institutions.

These partnership oriented institutional arrangements would be specifically focused on supporting institutional capacity of key sub-regional and local structures, being careful to ensure that any tribal level institutions not currently supported by sub-regional groups are indeed engaged in regional level negotiations and supported. Such governance-building support could best be achieved through an effective partnership between any emerging regional Indigenous-led institution aligned with continuing JCU/CSIRO/research sector partnership arrangements. These arrangement must address safeguards for particular information (such as heritage information) from the RAP and should be include documentation signed by both parties with appropriate legal status. While it is intended that support at the tribal/clan/family scale be best supported through sub-regional organisations, at the regional scale, agreed safety net arrangements would need to be in place to ensure RAP institutions at these scales are adequately and equitably supported.

4. Discussion, Conclusions and Next Steps

The purpose of this paper has been to review historical lessons and devise new foundations for securing the long term Indigenous-led management of the Wet Tropics for its cultural values.

Key success factors considered to date have included:

- Secure durable and stable agreements and implementation frameworks between Commonwealth and State governments, regional NRMs and Rainforest Aboriginal people;
- Getting the governance foundations of Indigenous-led management institutions right at the tribal/clan/family, sub-regional and regional scales;
- Ensuring there are independent and supportive partners in the system at regional, state and national scale that can help all key players establish and monitor key systemic and organisational governance benchmarks; ensuring a continuous improvement and adaptive management approach.

As a result of historical processes, Rainforest Aboriginal people have a clear philosophy and strategy for progressing towards a long term management framework. These arrangements, should, however, come into play in advance of the development of a full relisting case for the Wet Tropics and commencement of a National Heritage Action Plan.

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