

RAINFOREST ABORIGINAL news

Issue seventeen : December 2021



World Heritage update

Welcome to Edition 17 of the Rainforest Aboriginal News. We hope everyone has had a good year and are looking forward to the Christmas and New Year period.

The Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum took place in Cairns on the 23–25 of July, hosted by the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Think Tank (RAPTT) and facilitated by Professor Allan Dale with the support of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships. We would like to thank, the RAPTT, Professor Allan Dale, Dr Cath Moran and staff of the Authority for their work in bringing the forum together. We also thank those participants who willingly gave their valuable time and contributed their thoughts, and ideas to the forum's conversations.

The forum commenced with a half day closed session for Rainforest Aboriginal People on Friday, with the forum officially opening on Saturday morning with a keynote address from the Honourable Craig Crawford, Member for Barron River and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, who reaffirmed his support for the RAPTT.

Partners Terrain NRM and North Queensland Land Council provided updates along with key presentations from QPWS&P, the Office of the Great Barrier Reef and Great Barrier Reef Foundation. The forum provided

an opportunity for in-depth discussion amongst Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples who agreed on continued in-principle support for the RAPTT to:

- Seek investment to progress a Supplementary and Implementation agreement.
- Continue as the interim vehicle for progressing towards the Supplementary Agreement and to explore future governance arrangements with a stronger youth involvement.

The Authority's first Ecological Restoration Symposium was held on the 13–14 September during Leslie Shirreffs' chairmanship which brought practitioners, carbon funders and businesses, community, and land conservation trusts to discuss rehabilitation and restoration for the World Heritage Area.

On day one, Barry Hunter facilitated a Country & Economies Workshop with Rainforest Aboriginal People to share knowledge, experiences, and research to guide the work and management of Country.

Congratulations to those Indigenous organisations who were successful in the recent funding round for the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program, particularly those successful groups in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

We hope everyone has a safe and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Phil Rist and Ailsa Lively, Directors, Wet Tropics Management Authority Board



Chrissy Grant,
Chair

NRM update

Terrain has recently finalised its new strategic plan, which lays the foundation for the organisation's work for the next five years. It builds on Terrain's current capabilities while recognising the new challenges facing the region. The plan identifies six focus areas: soil health, waterway health, biodiversity, climate, regenerative economy and organisational excellence. Indigenous involvement is a cross cutting theme. From waterway health improvements to threatened species recovery and climate resilience, Terrain will be looking for ways to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and ensure that Traditional Owners benefit from its initiatives socially, culturally and economically.

Regenerative economy is a new focus area that is about economic models that look to regenerate the environment, community and culture rather than depleting them. It's about simultaneously caring for the environment and creating quality jobs and businesses. What are the jobs of tomorrow that could develop from working on country? Let's give ourselves the opportunity to explore what they may be, whether it's from the carbon industry, biodiversity offsets and so on.



Barry Hunter
Director, Terrain NRM Board

The Wet Tropics Management Authority will be closed on 24 December 2021 and reopen on 4 January 2022.

'On behalf of the board and the staff at the Authority we would like to thank Phil Rist for his valuable contributions as a Board Director over the past few years. Phil has a real passion and drive for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' involvement in the management of the Area and cultural values protection and his zeal has helped shape the work of the Authority.'
Scott Buchanan

We acknowledge Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and recognise their connection to this cultural landscape. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



"Look up, my people, to a bright new day"

Welcoming Chrissy Grant the new Chair and Ailsa Lively the new Director of the Board.

This is the first edition of the RAN since I took up the position on 24 September. As the new Chair the immediate priorities, to name a few, is to continue with the work that has been already done by the previous Board over the recent years. That includes fully supporting the Wet Tropics Strategic Plan including supporting Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' rights and interests in World Heritage management in refreshing the Regional Agreement; creating opportunities and support for communities around the Climate Change agenda and other threats; implementing the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan through projects and activities to support Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to tell their own stories.

Personally, I'm excited about being Australia's very first Indigenous Chair for a World Heritage Area Board let alone the first-ever Indigenous Chair of the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board. I think, and hope, that it will be the impetus for other appointments of Traditional Owners to the Boards and Steering Committees for their World Heritage Areas. Traditional Owners need to be part of the governance structures and processes in the nomination and overall management of World Heritage properties.

We are extremely fortunate that the Wet Tropics Board has regulated that there will be at least one male and one female Rainforest Aboriginal person on the Board. This is a bonus to also have a Rainforest Aboriginal person as the Chair, so a full Board will be split 50-50 with Rainforest Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people on the Board for at least the next 3 years. I'm very excited about this and look forward to working with the Directors to achieve some significant outcomes that will make a difference to the community, and the management and upkeep of the Outstanding Universal Values of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

Our new Board Director Ailsa Lively is a Gunggandji Women from the Yarrabah Aboriginal Community in Queensland. Ailsa has lived most of her life in Yarrabah and is very passionate in assisting her community become self-sustainable.

Ailsa has extensive experience in executive level management, leadership and governance. Ailsa is the Chief Executive Officer of the Gindja Treatment & Healing Centre has been in this role since January 2008. Prior to working at Gindja Ailsa spent 19 years with the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council.

"I have a passion for Governance and being a part of the Authority's board will broaden my skill base and assist me to build my knowledge around the

responsibilities of the Authority in the Wet Tropics Area."

"The Authority is committed to ensuring Rainforest Aboriginal People are included in decisions being made in the Wet Tropics, and through my appointment I will try to ensure that this continues. I feel quite privileged to be selected as the Female Indigenous Board member for the Authority." Ailsa is a firm believer in empowering others and community succession planning.

It is with deep respect but also with some sadness that we say goodbye to Phil Rist, the male Rainforest Aboriginal Board Director for the past 6 years. Phil joined the board on 26 May 2016 and has been instrumental in being a champion for the rights-based approach to world heritage management and providing significant leadership and support to the refresh of the Regional Agreement. Phil has been an incredible mentor and friend to the Authority staff, guiding them with culturally appropriate engagement and assisting with bringing Rainforest Aboriginal People along on the journey with all of these processes. At the same time, we also say goodbye and acknowledge Professor Iain Gordon who also served 6 years on the Board and was instrumental in guiding the Scientific Advisory Committee in its many achievements resulting in credible science across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Ecological research at Minjijil (Lake Morris)

Over the past few months Abriculture's Gimuy Walubarra Yidinji Rangers have conducted ecological research at Minjijil (Lake Morris) funded by the Queensland Government's Reef Assist Program. This project sees western science and tribal knowledge coming together to help manage and protect biodiversity and cultural heritage. The Gimuy Rangers have been trained in bird, reptile and spotlighting survey methods, this will allow them to produce valuable ecological data while working on country.

Working from a remote research station, the Gimuy Rangers have been heading out early in the morning and late at night searching the rainforest for elusive, endemic and endangered critters. And they've made some exciting discoveries, including healthy numbers of Gindaja (southern cassowaries) detected at the base of Bunda Gindaja (Lamb's Head).



This project is backed by James Cook University who have been conducting similar research on climate change in the Wet Tropics for decades. Many species are declining due to climate change and Minjilji offers a unique opportunity as a potential climate change refugia site. This is an area which may be buffered from the effects of climate change due to the lake and other geographical factors.



Gumbudda in our Mala: Cyclone in our Hands

In June earlier this year, Jumbun co-hosted a workshop with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) Australia at Murray Falls. The workshop explored the ecovillage framework and principles of social, ecology, culture and economy dimensions, integrating into whole systems design, to create pathways for communities to transition into thriving communities. This design system aligns beautifully with indigenous culture and values, as it is holistic and regenerative.

A key initiative that emerged from this workshop is the Gumbudda in our Mala - GioM (Cyclone in our Hand) program. GioM has been designed by community for community, to support a collective approach to community led decision making. The program is intended to address the underlying discord, allowing an opportunity for truth telling and healing, progressing to a unified approach to creating an independent, active, and thriving community.

As a community we recognise that to move forward we need to explore ways in which we can build self-reliance for the community and be in control of our future decision-making.

We want to be independent and strong in order to grow our local economy; whilst retaining our cultural heritage and traditional ecological knowledge so we can create a pathway and a plan that is robust and resilient for the next generations.

We have now begun this work in partnership with Hands on Heritage and GEN Australia, beginning with engaging our elders and moving out to the broader community. The process will span over the next three months and will feed into visioning and strategic planning of our transition plan to be a regenerative community.

Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031



North Johnstone River, Mamu Country
@Wet Tropics Images/Steven Nowakowski

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) successfully launched the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031 (the Plan) on 21 September 2021 at the Mandingalbay Ancient Indigenous Tours site, Hills Creek, East Trinity. The response to the launch of the Plan has been overwhelming, and the Authority and Savannah Guides have been busy delivering a series of roadshows to talk more in depth about the actions and goals identified in the plan. The roadshows attracted a diverse range of speakers talking about sustainable tourism from different perspectives including Gudjju Gudju Fourmile in Cairns and Juan Walker in Port Douglas. A fundamental part of this will be working with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to codesign actions associated with the goals of the Plan. Further roadshows are planned for next year. For more information, please contact Senior Project Officer (Tourism), Sarah Jordan at sarah.jordan@wtma.qld.gov.au or 0439 443 720.

The Authority would like to thank all who have been involved to date in the development of the Plan and the conversations regarding sustainable tourism in the Wet Tropics.

Smoking ceremony,
Wet Tropics Sustainable
Tourism Plan launch,
Mandingalbay Yidinji
Country



@Wet Tropics Images

Restoring Landscape



The Wet Tropics Management Authority hosted a two-day Landscape Restoration Symposium on Tableland Yidinji Country at Tinaroo Lake Resort on 13-14 September 2021. Over 150 people participated over the two days.

This was the first symposium of its kind held in the Wet Tropics, and a timely event, given 2021-2030 is the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration - an international rallying call to revive and restore landscapes and protect people's livelihoods and wellbeing.

The Symposium brought together practitioners, carbon funders and businesses, community, First Nations people and land conservation trusts to discuss rehabilitation and restoration across the Wet Tropics.

A 'Caring for Country and collaboration

for sustainable economies' yarning circle facilitated by Barry Hunter (Djabugay) provided an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to share knowledge, experiences and research about restoring tropical vegetation for biodiversity, culture and climate action. Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples are already actively engaged in landscape restoration across the Wet Tropics through the work of Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups, representative bodies and family and clan groups at property level. In their roles as employees of government, community organisations or research institutions and as members of community groups. It was wonderful to listen to their stories and experiences.

One of the exciting outcomes of the Symposium was to establish the

Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance to bring together a network of community, landholders, Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples industry, individuals, government and non-government organisations. This alliance will take action on the climate change crisis and initiate strategic landscape scale restoration initiatives.

The Authority is currently developing a project proposal to secure investment for the Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance. If you or your organisation would like more information about building social, cultural and economic outcomes through landscape restoration for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, contact Ellen Weber at ellen.weber@wtma.qld.gov.au or on mobile 0439 778 051 to learn more about how you can be involved.

Water work on country



Mamu Traditional Owners are making a difference on country by helping improve waterways in the Wet Tropics.

Francis (Fran) Joyce and Rebecca (Bec) Jose gained experience with Terrain Natural Resource Management as Water Quality Field Technicians for the Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project (MIP) – a community-designed project which trialled different methods to improve water quality in the Tully and Johnstone catchments.

Fran and Bec are not new to working in the environmental management field, both gaining experience working on Country through several years of land and conservation work.

"There's a huge amount of satisfaction I get from working on Country. I'm not only helping improve the land and water but setting an example and preserving it for our future generations," said Fran.

Thirteen Traditional Owners gained water quality sampling training through the Department of Environment and Science for the MIP and opportunities in similar water quality projects are on the horizon.

"The skills I've learnt and continue to develop will provide me with opportunities in the future, and I'm looking forward to continuing my work on Country. I enjoyed the range of work the job entails – from water sampling to equipment repair and data entry – no two days are the same," Bec said.

The Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project was funded by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.

This is our land, where it all begun, together may we stand as one.

our Day- Poem by Michele "Mickey" Hetherington

Ownership of the Daintree, Ngalba Bulal, Black Mountain and Hope Islands National Parks were handed back to the Eastern Kuku Yalanji Traditional Custodians in a special ceremony held on the 29 September 2021 in Bloomfield.

It is a significant milestone for Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners who will manage the National Parks with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partners jointly. 'Our goal and aspirations are to be able to take over the aspects of managing the national parks by ourselves, which will open opportunities for young Eastern Kuku Yalanji Bama with fulltime employment such as, work experience and apprenticeships. It is a moment where we can rewrite the tourism landscape.' Chrissy Grant

"Now we start talking about making it real, the funding, the training – we will work together on Country, on homes to be built, a cultural hub will be built." Lyn Johnson



Updates

What's been happening in the Wet Tropics...

1 September: Indigenous Literacy Day

3 September: Murama Indigenous Youth Summit

7 September: National Threatened Species Day

13 September: Anniversary of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

15–16 September: Landscape Restoration Symposium

20–26 September: National Recycle Week

21 September: Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan launch

26 September: World Cassowary Day

1–7 October: Australian Wildlife Week

27 & 29 October: Indigenous Cultural Heritage Conference 2021

16 November: Authority Board Meeting #117

17–18 November: Queensland Indigenous Women's Ranger Network

19 November: International Mens Day

30 November: Remembrance Day for Lost Species

1–2 December: RAPTT and Partners Meeting

5 December: International Volunteer Day

10 December: Human Rights Day