

Board Communique No 105

13-14 September 2018

The Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority held meeting No. 105 in Cairns on 13 and 14 September. The Board welcomed back Directors John Courtenay and Dr Leah Talbot who unfortunately were unable to attend meeting 104.

Mr David Edwards, the Major Projects Chief Executive of the Department of Innovation and Tourism Industry Development, was invited to attend part of the meeting and provide an overview of some of the exciting tourism projects in the pipeline for the region. David discussed the proposed Global Tourism Hub and the exciting work that is happening on the Wangetti Trail design concept. The Department's focus is to identify and progress attractions that will provide tourism benefits to the region. Directors discussed opportunities with David on ways to advance other projects throughout the region that will encourage visitation, appreciation and dispersal throughout the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

On day one of the meeting, the Directors focused on a number of significant policy issues to inform the continued development of the Wet Tropics Management Plan Review. The Authority has been out talking with stakeholders about the proposed changes to the Plan and responding to suggestions from the community. The Board provided advice on proposed new simplified classifications of roads, refinements to zoning systems and potential legislation changes that will affect the Plan. The Board was impressed with the extent and quality of work that has gone into the Plan development and recognised the breadth of engagement of Rainforest Aboriginal people, the tourism industry and other key players in the process.

The Board was provided with an update of the work of the Traditional Owners Leadership Group (TOLG) in refreshing the 2005 Regional Agreement. The TOLG was formed at the *Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Workshop to Discuss Wet Tropics World Heritage Matters*, held on 21 and 22 October 2017 to progress the Agreement's "refresh" under the direction of the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples. In progressing this work, the TOLG are working with the Authority, the North Queensland Land Council, Terrain NRM, and Government agencies and will report on progress to the next *Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Workshop* to be held in October 2018. The Board acknowledged the great work of the TOLG and reaffirmed their support for the group. The Board also acknowledged funding from the Department of Environment and Science that will support engagement, meetings and work across Government to improve their capacity for meaningful input to the project.

Climate Change poses a significant threat to the World Heritage values of the Wet Tropics, and the Authority has commenced the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The Board heard from Dr Sandra Abell (Principal Scientist) who provided a summary of the outcomes from a workshop on climate change adaptation in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area on Thursday, 5 July 2018. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together Traditional Owners, land managers, experts and other stakeholders to review current climate change projections for the World Heritage Area and understand the likely impacts on its Outstanding Universal Value. The workshop heard from Indigenous cultural ecologists as well as mainstream researchers who identified that climate change is already having a measurable impact on the natural values of the region. The workshop identified key principles for planning, setting goals and determining actions that can be taken. Supporting the species and ecosystems in the Wet Tropics in building resilience and adaptation potential to climate change is a big challenge. The Board identified the Authority's role as supporting on-ground actions but also communicating broadly to inform the community of the actions that can

be taken and the risks of failing to take action. The Board also saw a strong role for WTMA to communicate the risks to our State and National leaders to ensure they are aware of the gravity of the situation.

On Thursday morning, Terry Carmichael, Senior Project Officer, presented a short clip from a video animation being developed to tell the Wet Tropics World Heritage Story. This exciting project, being developed in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Science, will be an entertaining and informative approach in portraying how the geological history of the Australian continent played a major role in the shaping the unique World Heritage areas in Queensland. The end result of this project will be a series of videos that highlight the Wet Tropics, Fraser Island (K'Gari), Riversleigh and Gondwana World Heritage Areas. The Wet Tropics video will be finalised and launched later this year as part of the 30 year celebrations and provides a good example of the work the Authority is doing to better inform the community of the exceptional importance of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The Board reviewed a report on the successful partnership agreement between the Authority and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in the Department of Environment and Science, commending both organisations on their collaborative approach to managing the outstanding universal value of the world heritage area.

As a final point, the Board passed on their appreciation to the Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC) Taskforce, organized by the Authority and the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC). In August this year more than 70 participants, from the following organisations, joined forces to comprehensively survey watercourses below the current yellow crazy ant infestation areas:

- Hinchinbrook Shire Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Douglas Shire Council
- Terrain NRM
- Abiculture Gimuy Rangers
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- NQ Land Management Services
- Gunggandji Rangers
- Biosecurity Queensland
- AWX Contractors

Last wet season saw large volumes of water moving through the creek systems and this was identified as a high risk for dispersal of this invasive pest. In one week, the taskforce surveyed 215 hectares, and 35.5 kilometres, of waterways and collected 17,667 points of data! Only one new infestation was detected approximately 450 metres downstream from a known infestation, which can now be treated and contained. The Board thank FNQROC, and all organisations and community members who work with the Authority to eradicate this pest.

The next board meeting is scheduled for December 2018.