

Board Communique No 106

14 December 2018

The board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority held meeting No. 106 in Cairns. It was their last meeting for 2018, and the first meeting of the reappointed board of directors. Their reappointments were agreed by the Minister for Environment and Science the Hon Leeanne Enoch, and by the former Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy, Josh Frydenberg MP.

Chair of the board, Ms Leslie Shirreffs PSM and directors, Professor Iain Gordon and Mr Phil Rist were appointed for a three-year term, while directors Mr John Courtenay, Ms Anne Clarke and Dr Leah Talbot return for an 18-month term. Ministers agreed to stagger appointment terms to maintain strong institutional governance and leadership memory within the Wet Tropics Management Authority, and ensure continuity of programs and decision-making.

The major item for discussion was to approve the draft Wet Tropics Management Plan for release for phase 2 public consultation in early February 2019. At previous meetings, the board agreed to develop the Plan in two parts. A new Part A provides strategic direction to proactively address priority issues raised by the Wet Tropics community during phase 1 consultation, while Part B is the amended regulation. Over the past six months, the draft plan has undergone review by the Authority's Community Consultative Committee, Scientific Advisory Committee, the Interdepartmental Steering Committee, industry groups (including local governments and tourism), and Traditional Custodians including through the Regional Rainforest Aboriginal people's regional forum.

The Wet Tropics team will ensure the amended draft plan is distributed widely in February 2019 to maximise opportunities for public feedback. The outcomes of phase 2 consultation will be brought back to the board in late May 2019 with the final document expected to be released later next year.

Directors were provided with the summary report from the Rainforest Aboriginal people's regional forum which was held at Mission Beach in late October. More than 80 Rainforest participants attended the forum and important resolutions were passed. It was a moving and historic meeting, with a number of the original signatories to the 2005 Regional Agreement attending. Rainforest forum members endorsed the Traditional Owner Leadership Group to continue driving the agenda to refresh the Regional Agreement.

In her report to the board as chair of the Community Consultative Committee, Anne Clarke advised that members of the committee, Siggy Heise-Pavlov and Alan Gillanders, were invited to attend the launch of the [Gillies Range Road anti-litter campaign](#). The committee were instrumental in alerting the Department of Environment and Science on the negative impact on the rainforest ecosystems and wildlife of dumped items and litter on this otherwise scenic road that winds its way through World Heritage rainforests between the Tableland and Gordonvale, and is home to threatened species.

Alison Webb, Regional Director of Northern Parks and Forest, QPWS, provided a status report on protected area matters across the region. Over the past fortnight, Parks staff and fire crews have been dealing with 35 fires across the northern region. In the Eungella region (Central Queensland), over 100,000ha of land was devastated by wild fires, including about 3,000ha of rainforest, which scientists say may take hundreds of years to recover. Heat wave conditions have eased but the

teams are now working to ensure the safety of people and property on parks with Tropical Cyclone Owen expected to bring flood conditions to the north tropical coast.

The Authority's Scientific Advisory Committee have previously alerted the board to the risk posed by climate change which has long been predicted to increase extreme weather incidents. Directors agreed that in terms of emerging issues, climate change is the biggest challenge for the road ahead if they are to achieve their obligations to the World Heritage Convention. The Wet Tropics Climate Adaptation Plan, currently in development will identify adaptation activities based on a partnership approach that recognises that climate change is everyone's responsibility. The board reinforced the need for a collaborative approach to ensure resilience is embedded in Queensland's diverse economies, landscapes and communities.

In their reflection over the past 12 months, directors praised staff and the effective leadership of the management team, led by Executive Director Scott Buchanan, for their hard work, efforts and positive engagement and partnership with clients, collaborators and industry.

The board wished everybody a peaceful and safe holiday break. Directors thanked staff for an amazing term of the board, a remarkable year and for the support they provide in driving and achieving the goals of the Board and the Authority.

The next board meeting is scheduled for February 2019.

Background about the board and the Wet Tropics Management Authority

The board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority is established under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 (Qld)*, with the key function to implement programs to meet Australia's international obligations for the Area under the World Heritage Convention.

The roles of the board include: being responsible for the way in which the Authority performs its functions and exercises its powers; deciding the objectives, strategies and policies to be followed by the Authority; and ensuring that the Authority performs its functions in a proper, effective and efficient way.

Board of Directors Wet Tropics Management Authority

Chair – Ms Leslie Shirreffs

Ms Leslie Shirreffs PSM has extensive experience relating to World Heritage management policy and programs across Australia, biodiversity conservation, vegetation management, land planning and wildlife conservation.

Director – Mr John Courtenay

John Courtenay is a tourism consultant with over 40 years' experience in the development of tourism and the challenges of the development of Far North Queensland. He was a member of the team that negotiated on behalf of the tourist industry during the formation of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the establishment of the Wet Tropics Plan.

Director – Ms Anne Clarke

Anne Clarke has 18 years' public sector experience and seven years in her current roles as Commonwealth fisheries committee chair and as a project consultant in natural resource management, regional planning and sustainable development. Ms Clarke's skills include community engagement, coastal stream and wetland restoration, fisheries management, integrated pest management and the protection of wildlife habitat values and connectivity. Ms Clarke's position as Regional Director Manager (North), Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and

as a member of the Reef CRC included responsibility for the delivery of programs relating to fishing, tourism, engineering and environmental control, and ports and shipping. Ms Clarke chairs the Authority's *Community Consultative Committee*.

Director – Professor Iain Gordon

Professor Iain Gordon has a recognised international reputation in scientific excellence and leadership in environmental research. Professor Gordon has over 30 years' research experience on agriculture and environment issues across a range of continents as well as experience in engaging policy and industry stakeholders to ensure that research is relevant to the needs of those that will be using the knowledge. Prof. Gordon chairs the Authority's *Scientific Advisory Committee*.

Director – Mr Phil Rist

Mr Phil Rist is the executive officer of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation and Deputy Chair of the North Queensland Land Council. Phil is a widely respected Nywaigi Indigenous leader whose skill and determination has played a key role in establishing the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation as one of the most successful Indigenous community-based organisations in Australia.

Director – Dr Leah Talbot

Dr Leah Talbot is a descendant of the Kuku Yalanji People from the Bloomfield River area in Cape York Peninsula. Dr Talbot is a Project Research Officer with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). She is experienced in environmental management, high level Indigenous negotiations, developing collaborative Indigenous research methodologies, participative planning with Indigenous communities, and collaborative research in Indigenous land management techniques.