

## Board Communique No 107

4–5 March 2019

The board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority held their first meeting for the year on 4–5 March. Chair of the board, Ms Leslie Shirreffs PSM was joined by directors Mr John Courtenay, Ms Anne Clarke, Mr Phil Rist and Dr Leah Talbot, Professor Iain Gordon joined the meeting via teleconference. Senior officers from the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy and the Queensland Department of Environment and Science also attended. It was a very busy meeting schedule, and a number of important strategic matters were considered.

Directors were thrilled that nominations for the 2019 Cassowary Awards have opened, with a new category of Climate Change Leadership. The Cassowary Awards recognise community efforts to conserve, present and protect the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. They encouraged everyone to nominate outstanding individuals and organisations who apply their passion and skills to protect and showcase the Area. Nominations close 18 March 2019.

Mr David Edwards, the Major Projects Chief Executive of the Department of Innovation and Tourism Industry Development (DITID) attended part of the meeting to provide an update on the Wangetti Trail design concept. This is a proposal to build a leisure trail for walkers and mountain bike riders extending from Palm Cove to Port Douglas. Directors were briefed at a previous board meeting about this proposal, including a preliminary review of natural and cultural impacts of the trail. They appreciated the continuing dialogue with DITID and acknowledged that the concept is broadly consistent with the Wet Tropics Presentation Strategy. They expressed some confidence that DITID will seek to avoid adverse impacts on World Heritage values and encouraged DITID to ensure broader benefits to local communities from the significant investment in the Trail. The Authority, however, will wait for the final proposal to complete an assessment under the statutory Wet Tropics Management Plan.

The Planning and Conservation team provided an update on phase 2 of the review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan. This review is an opportunity for the Authority to seek the community's views and to update the Management Plan to ensure it reflects current land management practices. While the Management Plan is a regulatory instrument that the Authority uses to manage and protect the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, in practice the Authority collaborates with many partners to achieve this. Directors are keen for the public to provide feedback during the second round of consultation. Submissions close on 18 April 2019. More information can be found at [wettropics.gov.au/PlanReview](http://wettropics.gov.au/PlanReview).

The Chair provided an update on the recent Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC) meeting. This committee comprises senior leaders, executives and chairs from the 19 Australian World Heritage Properties. Priority work for AWHAC this year is being advanced through a number of working groups that have been established to advance monitoring and evaluation, tourism and visitor management, and Indigenous Cultural Heritage including meaningful participation of First Nations people in World Heritage. This year there will also be a strong focus on re-establishing and supporting the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network as a much needed committee to give voice to First Nations participation in World Heritage management. The committee also established a new working group established on climate change, which the chair has agreed to lead.

Directors were updated on the success of the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program. With funding due to cease in June 2019, Directors discussed the importance of the funding bids under

consideration by the Australian and State governments being approved to ensure the program's viability. Discussions with the State and Commonwealth will continue to give certainty to the program's future and achievement of the 10-year eradication plan outcomes.

Authority committee members Ms Ellie Bock—Community Consultative Committee (CCC) and Dr Lea Scherl—Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), briefed directors with their ideas about working towards collaborative governance for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This was a thought provoking presentation about the practice of participation, mechanisms to foster collaboration and approaches for collaborative decision-making. This was a timely presentation, given the three year terms of the SAC and CCC will expire in November 2019, and the Authority will need to review their function and operation. Directors agreed that Lea's and Ellie's ideas will assist in those deliberations.

Directors also discussed an application for rezoning to accommodate essential infrastructure in the Tully Gorge National Park. The Authority has advertised a notice of application, and invited written submissions on the proposal. Information is available at [wettropics.gov.au/plan-rezoning](http://wettropics.gov.au/plan-rezoning). Submissions close on 8 April 2019.

On the second day of the meeting, directors travelled with Mandingalbay Ancient Indigenous Tours across the Trinity Inlet to Mandingalbay Yidinji country, which takes in East Trinity Environmental Reserve, the Murray Prior Range, the western slopes of the Nisbet Range and across the Malbon Thompson Range into the Coral Sea, including a family of the Franklin Islands. After a welcome smoking ceremony; directors visited the site of their proposed indigenous tourism infrastructure project, which aims to showcase history, environment and cultural values through enlightening interactive indigenous experiences. The rest of the morning was spent on a guided eco-cultural tour that included the Mayi Bugan\* trail walk at the base of Grey Peaks National Park. Tour guides, Victor Bulmer and Laurissa Mundraby were generous in sharing some of their vast knowledge on how to use their 'bush supermarket' and 'pharmacy' for sustenance and healing, as well as how they manage country.

During the afternoon directors travelled via Yarrabah to the Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples Prescribed Body Corporate (GMYPPBC) Trustee Area to discuss current planning initiatives underway, where they were warmly welcomed by GMYPPBC Chair, Dwayne Mundraby. The GMYPPBC Board of Directors are working with the Traditional Owners, the Yarrabah Aboriginal Council and the Authority to develop a Masterplan for the area.

The Masterplan will accommodate the Gunggandji Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples' socioeconomic aspirations with regard to rezoning, access and management of the GMYPPBC World Heritage Areas. While travelling through the Trustee Area, the directors were able to inspect new interpretive signs at BuddaBadoo, Jilji and Kunjurra, which were made possible with a Wet Tropics Rainforest Aboriginal Grant.

It was an extremely positive day. Directors acknowledged the leadership shown by the GMYPPBC in the work they have undertaken on their traditional lands, as well as providing support and knowledge sharing for other groups and government agencies working to achieve similar outcomes.

Board directors will meet again in May, but will connect prior to that by phone in late March to consider the 2019 Cassowary Award nominations.

\* In Yidinji language, *Mayi* means food and *Bugan* means walking (migrate from one place to the next).