

***In attendance***
**Directors**

Ms Leslie Shirreffs	Chair
Professor Iain Gordon	Director
Ms Chrissy Grant	Director
Dr Sally Driml	Director
Mr Scott Buchanan	Executive Director

**Observers**

Ms Angela Siggery	Director, Cultural Capability and Connections, Department of Environment and Science (DES)
Mr James Newman	Executive Director, Northern Parks and Forests, DES
Ms Jacqui Dunlop	Acting Assistant Director, Natural Heritage Section, Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment*

**Guests**

Ms Ahlia Karam	Senior Environmental Officer—World Heritage, DES
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**Authority officers**

Ms Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez	Manager, World Heritage Connections
Mr Tim Wong	Manager, Planning and Conservation
Ms Lucy Karger	Project Manager, Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program
Ms M'Lis Flynn	Executive Officer
Ms Debra Parker	Business Manager
Ms Jeanette Wormald	Strategic Communications Advisor, World Heritage Connections
Ms Alicia Haines	Senior Project Officer, World Heritage Connections
Mr Chris Jahnsen	Principal Project Officer, World Heritage Connections
Mrs Rebecca Lagerroth	Manager, Aboriginal Partnerships, World Heritage Connections
Ms Ellen Weber	Senior Scientist, Planning and Conservation
Mr Eli Taylor	Senior Planning Officer, Planning and Conservation
Ms Julie Colman	Principal Planning Officer, Planning and Conservation
Mr Terry Carmichael	Senior Project Officer, Planning and Conservation

*\*attendance via videoconference*

**1. INTRODUCTION**
**1.1. Chair's introduction and welcome**

The Chair Leslie Shirreffs acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics region and paid respect to Elders past, present and emerging. The chair also acknowledged Traditional Owners from each of the regions in which directors and observers were calling from. Leslie welcomed all directors, observers and participants and thanked Authority staff for organising Board meeting 113.

The Chair invites all Directors to introduce themselves in light of the attendance of two new Directors—Dr Sally Driml replaces John Courtney's position in tourism and Ms Chrissy Grant replaces Anne Clarke's position in governance.

- Dr Sally Driml outlined her background and experience in tourism highlighting her long association with the region even prior to listing for World Heritage.
- Ms Chrissy Grant introduced herself as an Eastern Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owner with connections to the Torres Strait. Chrissy has been involved with world heritage properties internationally for many years. She has been a member of the RAPSCCTT (formerly TOLG) since 2017, originally for her expertise on ethics not as an Indigenous Advisory member.

Other Directors, observers and staff attending also introduced themselves

## **1.2. Apologies**

Board Director Mr Phil Rist was unable to attend and gave an apology.

Ms Helen Wright, Director of Heritage Section—Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment was also unable to attend.

## **1.3. Conflict of interest**

- Chrissy Grant declared a conflict of interest for any discussion relating to the RAPSCCTT and the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan
- Professor Iain Gordon declared a conflict if science or science policy is to be discussed.

# **2. MINUTES AND ACTIONS ARISING**

## **2.1. Endorsement of Board minutes 112**

### **Resolution**

The board **endorsed** the minutes from Board meeting No 112.

## **2.2. Actions arising**

The Chair worked through Actions Arising with updates provided to all items. All updates have been made to the Actions Arising table.

### **Resolution**

The board **updated** the actions arising.

# **3. REPORTS**

## **3.1. Chair's report**

The Chair, Leslie Shirreffs, briefed the Board on the most significant activities she has undertaken since the last meeting in May 2020. The Chair:

- Wrote to all incoming Mayors following the Queensland Local Government elections to re-establish our connection and relationships with councils. The Chair was invited to meet with several of them to discuss approach to resilience and tourism destination planning:
  - Mayor Michael Kerr, Douglas Shire Council Mayor
  - Mayor Bob Manning, Cairns Regional Council
  - Mayor Timothy Nolan, Cr Trudy Tschui and Cr Jeff Baines, Cassowary Coast Regional Council
  - Mayor Ramon Jayo and all councillors, Hinchinbrook Shire Council
- Discussed the Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package at meetings with:
  - Senator Nita Green
  - Senator Larissa Waters
  - Member for Leichardt, Warren Entsch
- Continued on-going relationship for Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package with Terrain NRM Chair, Keith Noble.

In addition, the Chair:

- remained active within the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC) and participated in several key AWHAC projects including chairing the Climate Change Working

Group. As chair of the Climate Change Working Group Leslie contributed to several submissions and led sessions at the World Heritage Forum

- stepped back a little from RAPSCCTT to continue to foster self-determination and ensure outcomes are Rainforest Aboriginal led
- met separately with outgoing TTNQ Chair Wendy Morris and discussed future potential collaborations with incoming chair, Ken Chapman
- engaged in a few radio interviews regarding yellow crazy ants and spoke at the two Science and Smashed Avocado events.

The Chair wrote to the new Queensland Minister for Environment Meaghan Scanlon and is seeking a briefing with her in coming weeks.

The Chair acknowledged the intense pressure on the Authority during this period in particular in relation to the production of documents and reports. She thanked recent past Director Anne Clarke for continuing as interim chair of the Community Consultative Committee pending new board appointments.

### Resolution

The board **noted** the Chair's report.

### 3.2. Executive Director's report

Executive Director, Scott Buchanan, provided the Board with a comprehensive report stating that:

- 2020 has been a big year for the Authority, with COVID-19 as the most significant impacting factor, particularly with community engagement across all program areas.
- there has been significant transformational change with 50% of staff moving to home-based work and field staff implementing effective physical distancing measures to continue working, including with contractors
- the Queensland Government has implemented significant budget restrictions that have hampered the Authority's ability to fill positions and engage contractors
- despite the challenges we have achieved some massive outcomes including:
  - completion of the review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan
  - recruitment of two new Board directors (Sally and Chrissy)
  - publishing three editions of the Rainforest Aboriginal News and the E-news
  - marked increase in social media quantity and engagement including the two Science and Smashed Avocado breakfasts
  - Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package and Reef Assist Package (the Authority received \$2.6M out of \$10 million – for Traditional Owner employment and threatened species monitoring)
- the Authority is now preparing for our half yearly budget and business plan review. In April we submit our milestone report and business plan for 2021-22. The board will need to approve these through an out of session meeting.
- the Authority had a 71% response rate to the Working for Queensland survey. Increase in organisational flexibility and team cohesion. Some work to do to address excessive workloads and a drop in development opportunities. Putting it out to the staff to come up with solutions to some of these issues.

The Executive Director updated the Board on the Conran review and proposed changes to existing COAG committees, including Ministerial forums and committees. The Conran Review recommended cessation of Ministerial Forums including the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef forums, which will lead to some legislative changes for the Wet Tropics. It will necessitate some legislative changes to

the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*.

The Authority is responsible for considering human rights and Native Title in all decisions. It involves a significant amount of work to look at all policies to make sure the Authority is compliant. Native Title assessment is lacking in rigour so work underway to meet the benchmark across government.

A World heritage gateway concept was considered in Cairns since 2010, although the tourism hub is no longer considered as a feasibility. DITID currently considering the world heritage gateway as a standalone initiative. Self-sufficiency the key, rather than reliance on on-going government funding. Proposal unlikely to proceed at this stage.

The Executive Director brought directors attention to correspondence with Douglas Shire Council and Main Roads. The issues were dealt with quickly and some good solutions were identified quickly. Training has been delivered on how the new Wet Tropics Management Plan operates.

### **Resolution**

The board **noted** the Executive Director's report.

### **3.3. Director's issues**

#### **Professor Iain Gordon**

- CSIRO have seen the 2019–20 State of Wet Tropics report for the vulnerability assessment and are very pleased with it. The Report has been tabled in the Federal parliament. Now we are just waiting for it to be tabled in the State Parliament.
- The Authority provided two letters of support for the National Environment Science Program (NESP). The program did get money through the budget and negotiations have commenced. Hopeful of announcement before Christmas.

#### **Dr Sally Driml**

- No issues to report

#### **Chrissy Grant**

- No issues to report

### **Resolution**

The board **noted** directors' issues.

### **3.4. Australian and Queensland government department reports**

#### **Ms Jacqui Dunlop (Assistant Director, Department of Agriculture Water and the Environment, Natural Heritage Branch)**

Jacqui Dunlop updated the board on a several issues including:

- World Heritage Committee – extraordinary session held on 2 November and the 44<sup>th</sup> session will be held mid 2021 in China. This year's meeting cancelled in light of COVID-19.
- The UNESCO 7-yearly Periodic Report is due in July 2021. Periodic Reporting is one of two monitoring mechanisms under the World Heritage Convention to receive updates on the state of conservation of listed properties, assess how the Convention is being implemented more broadly, and facilitate regional cooperation.

- DAWE will work with the Authority to meet these requirements. Responses will be presented to the World Heritage Committee in 2022.
- First Assistant Secretary, Stephen Oxley, provided extensive commentary on the third draft of the World Heritage Centres review of the 2007 World Heritage Climate Change Policy.
- the IUCN' 3-yearly Outlook Report is due to be released on 30 November 2020. In the Wet Tropics draft ratings indicate that the:
  - Conservation Outlook assessment will remain the same as the 2017 IUCN Report—Significant Concern
  - Overall protection and management will remain the same as (Mostly) Effective
  - Overall Assessment of Threats will change from High Threat in 2017 to Very High Threat.
- EPBC Act review – submitted to Minister 30 October and waiting for response. Public release up to the government.
- Conran review – Prime Minister has written to the department on the MEM asking to streamline the approach and to come back with three key priorities to PM&C by February 2021. We will advocate to ensure that the Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum continues functioning along with the Great Barrier Reef.
- Minister Ley announced \$33.5m in funding on 1 October to support World and National Heritage places with the intent to enable heritage places to invest in tourism infrastructure projects. In the wet tropics the funding will cover a new culture and tourism hub and visitors centre and the development of four kilometres of mountain bike trails and trail-head facilities.
- Australian Heritage Grants are open until the 7 January 2021. The grants provide funding for projects that improve recognition and conservation, preservation and community engagement of world and national heritage sites. Wet Tropics is eligible.
- The Australian Government's World Heritage Forum was held from 3–6 November by videoconference. It included workshops on:
  - Climate change adaptation for World Heritage properties
  - Bushfire preparedness and recovery, lessons learnt
  - First Nations People in World Heritage management, and
  - World Heritage Resilience—focussing on economic recovery in the face of fires, climate change and COVID-19.
- Jacqui thanked the Chair for chairing the session on World Heritage Resilience, and Scott for presenting on the Green Blue Stimulus Package in this same session.
- The department has been putting a lot of work into a vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in Australia and best practice standards for Indigenous cultural heritage management and legislation. It will guide how the Australian Government moves forward with Indigenous engagement. Currently working with the National Indigenous Australians Agency on how to implement it.

**Ms Angela Siggery (Director, Partnerships Branch, Department of Environment and Science)**

From DES Partnerships Branch Angela Siggery provided the Board with an update on programs in other Queensland world heritage areas, stating that her team:

- currently engaged in periodic and outlook reporting
- coming up with ideas for the Australian Heritage Grants for each of the world heritage properties we're responsible for

- The Department received \$6 million through the \$33.5 million program Jacqui mentioned for 2 projects in the wet tropics: Daintree National Park hub and Cardwell mountain bike trails
- Working on a World Heritage Strategy for Queensland – terrestrial focus. Won't encompass the Great Barrier Reef.

Angela also provided more detail on each of the properties:

- K'gari
  - Committees didn't get through so setting up a revised committee structure – with 5 Butchulla representatives, 5 scientific and 5 community, and an independent chair
  - fires continue to be a main concern and involves increased reporting – an animated map of fire spread has been produced showing the spread over the 40 days. Keen to support Butchulla people to undertake post fire cultural heritage assessments.
  - some great projects happening on K'gari:
    - biosecurity with Department Agriculture and Fisheries and the Land and Sea Rangers focused on myrtle rust
    - climate change projects with NESP and with internal funding
    - a new ILUA is being negotiated through agreement making team
    - developing a field guide with the Queensland Museum
    - investigating potential waste strategy for K'gari
- Gondwana
  - Aligning world heritage planning with the values-based management framework
  - Recent first meeting with Gondwana Traditional Owner representatives in Queensland
  - Considering alternative management models, and possible separation from NSW because of funding pressures and different priorities.
- Riversleigh
  - Setting up the committee.
  - Strategic planning with Traditional Owners, for the three properties to align with requirements of Commonwealth as well as DES Values-based Management Framework
- Quandamooka
  - planning for potential expert workshops early in 2021
  - undertaking consultation early in 2021

The Chair identified an opportunity for a joint funding application (e.g., through the Australian Heritage Grants) to bring together all the players to learn from recent fire experiences and sharing knowledge. Scott and James.

#### **Mr James Newman (Executive Director, DES—Northern Parks and Forests)**

James Newman briefed the Board on current programs for QPWS&P in the northern region (Wet Tropics) including highlighting:

- COVID-19 has been a big challenge for QPWS&P also. Managed to keep parks running.
- QPWS and Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation (MYAC) have signed a 30-year lease for the East Trinity ecotourism development with the title registered 14 October 2020
- Exploring opportunity for Aboriginal freehold grant for the old science centre to Mandingalbay Yidinji. Risks in that that are being worked through.
- A five year Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 30 June 2020 between QPWS and Girringun Aboriginal Corporation to formalise and support the Girringun Artists' ongoing use of the old QPWS ranger base at Girramay National Park. As part of the MOU QPWS has essentially handed over the ranger base for Girramay people's sole use.

- Barron Falls Walking Trail Upgrade is nearing completion. The project involved upgrade of two existing sections of the elevated boardwalk (approx. 260m long) which forms the pedestrian link from the carpark at Barron Falls to the start of the pedestrian bridge of the rail line (bridge out of scope owned by QRAIL). The boardwalk entry is also upgraded.
- QPWS is working with Ecotourism Development Unit, at the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation, and the Authority to plan aspects of the Wangetti Trail including providing input into the design and construction contract.
- Assessment of the Misty Mountains trail network was undertaken in August 2020 involving QPWS Rangers and Queensland Police Service to determine future management options and possible rationalisation of part of the network.
- QPWS are working with the Authority and Cape York Tenure Resolution Branch on the Eastern Kuku Yalanji handback. The Indigenous Management Agreement has been agreed in principle. The Minister approved the negotiated Eastern Kuku Yalanji Tenure Outcome on 16 June 2020.
- Under significant budget pressure.
- Assisting WTMA with some compliance work outside of the parks estate.

### Resolution

The board **noted** the Australian and Queensland Government reports.

### 3.5. Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) report

Director and Chair of the SAC, Professor Iain Gordon provided the Board with an update from recent meetings of the SAC held on 16 October and 25 November 2020. Iain shared the following points:

- The SAC held a workshop focused on putting together a citizen science program for the wet tropics area in October.
- At yesterday's meeting, SAC learnt that CSIRO are doing climate vulnerability assessments (funded through DAWE) for all world heritage sites in Australia. The Wet Tropics has been chosen as one of the key case studies given the amount of information available. Mandy Hopkins will facilitate a workshop with the SAC, CCC and key staff from WTMA in February. Stephen Oxley will take the report on the Vulnerability Assessment Framework to the World Heritage Committee in June 2021. This is a great opportunity to showcase the wet tropics.
- The Authority has progressed a terms of reference to put a call out for citizen science projects following the workshop in October. SAC members are keen for the Authority to continue running a student grant program, with some amendments to administration, including the possibility for sponsorship, to be discussed at next SAC meeting.
- The researcher protocol pilot was discussed. SAC members agreed that they need to support researchers to change culture over time, including communication and the capacity of communities to deal with requests from researchers. The SAC would like to discuss this before the end of the trial.
- Jeff Jackson and Lori Lach led a useful discussion with the SAC on how the research for the yellow crazy ant program is fed back into program design.
- The SAC has put together a terms of reference for a working group who will look into investment opportunities for the Climate Adaptation Plan.
- The SAC will meet again in Feb 2021. Planning on having a mix of virtual meetings and workshops in 2021.

## Resolution

The Board **noted** the SAC report.

### Actions:

- Provide a copy of the researcher protocol to Dr Sally Driml.
- Share the terms of reference for the SAC working group with the Board and CCC. The working group is looking at investment opportunities for the climate adaptation plan.

### 3.6. Community Consultative Committee (CCC) report

Manager of World Heritage Connections, Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez updated the Board on the outcomes and discussions at the CCC meeting held on 24 November. The meeting was held both virtually and in-person and utilized MIRO software to collate, synthesize and discuss ongoing and emerging issues for CCC members. Key issues included:

- EPBC review—strong concerns about the bill and the concurrent review and no due process. Also felt that the Senate Inquiry was insufficient, lacking in threatened species recovery. The CCC thanked the Chair for sharing the AHWAC submission and would like to have seen the Authority put in its own submission.
- Ensuring the priorities of the CCC aligns with the Authority's strategic direction and where they can have the greatest influence
- Use of MIRO to capture CCC members' issues - threatened species, building an educated community, rethinking tourism, managing threats in adjacent areas, water quality, legislative reform, public participation, climate change and associated impacts.
- Have provided CCC members the specific projects the Authority is delivering and opportunities to participate e.g. education workshop

The Board noted that they sent correspondence to Minister Ley outlining the concerns of the CCC in relation to the EPBC Senate Inquiry and review. The Chair also thanked former Director Anne Clarke for continuing to chair the CCC until the Authority had new directors.

## Resolutions

The Board **noted** the CCC report.

The Board **endorsed** Dr Sally Driml to chair the CCC.

### Actions:

- Seek advice from the SAC and CCC on who is appropriate to approach for investment into climate action.
- Prepare Dr Driml for her role as CCC chair, with briefings and materials.
- Provide a copy of the AHWAC submission to the CCC.
- Advise the CCC that Sally Driml will be the new Chair.



### 3.7. Significant correspondence

Date	In	Out	From / To	Purpose	Action for directors
28 May 2020		✓	<b>TO:</b> The Hon Minister Ley – Aust Minister for the Environment	<b>Advice</b> —from the Chair on behalf of the CCC and SAC re: the review of the EPBC Act	None required
11 June 2020	✓		<b>FROM:</b> Michael Kerr—Mayor of Douglas Shire Council	<b>Response to WTMA correspondence</b> —acknowledging the Chair’s congratulations and inviting the Chair to meet and discuss issues	None required
6 Aug 2020		✓	<b>TO:</b> The Hon Minister Enoch-QLD Minister for Environment	<b>Alert</b> —advising that the nominee for the vacant Indigenous Identified (female) board director position was unable to accept	None required
15 June – 3 Nov 2020		✓	<b>FROM:</b> WTMA	<b>Various media releases</b> —for: - Vico St YCA infestation treatment results - International Day of the Tropics - Release of Rainforest Aboriginal Grants round - Green Blue economic stimulus package - Science and Smashed Avo’s event on cultural burning - Indigenous research protocols trial Science and Smashed Avo’s event on climate adaptation	None required
11 Nov 2020		✓	<b>TO:</b> All Queensland members with jurisdiction in the Wet Tropics bioregion	<b>Introduction</b> —congratulations to newly appointed members and invitation to meet with the Chair to discuss Wet Tropics matters	None required
	✓		<b>FROM:</b> The Hon Minister Ley – Aust Minister for the Environment		

### Resolution

The Board **noted** the correspondence report.

### 3.8. Financial and HR systems induction

Directors participated in the financial administration part of their induction. This included the corporate compliance functions and obligations of directors.

The Authority’s business Manager, Debra Parker, introduced Directors to their responsibilities as public servants. This includes:

- The mandatory code of conduct and fraud and corruption training.
- Declaring and recording all gifts on the gifts register.
- Human Resource and financial delegations and the Queensland Shared Services system to manage HR and finance.
- Procurement processes, separation of delegations and audits.
- The Authority is a category B Statutory Authority because banking is managed by DES in Brisbane. Obligated to use all the Departments financial, HR and IT policy, procedure, systems and processes e.g. Aurion and SAP. The Authority’s Budget is built annually. Use Financial Reporter to monitor expenditure against cost codes and GL codes.
- The Authority does have its own ABN so it can enter into its own agreements and send and receive invoices.

- Directors have a fiducial duty to see that the money is being spent appropriately, in accordance with operational and strategic plan. Directors approve the Authority's budget. If the Authority has not spent its funding at the end of the financial year, the state can take the money back and reallocate it.
- All IT procured through Brisbane.

Directors were introduced to the Authority's Administration Officer, Aggie Walsh, who assists with travel bookings, allowances and catering for meetings. Directors can send their travel details to Aggie two weeks prior to a board meeting. The Authority is required to book the cheapest flights available. Directors were requested to let Aggie know as early possible if flights needed to be changed or cancelled so that refunds or credits can be obtained.

#### **Actions:**

- Send Directors links to enable them to undertake Code of Conduct training and Fraud and Corruption training within 14 days
- Investigate with DES if it is possible for Directors to select the carbon offsets box when they fly to board meetings.

## **4. STRATEGIC ISSUES**

### **4.1. Strategy 1—background briefing**

The Authority's Strategic Plan came out of the review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan. Climate change was an important issue raised. The Authority looked at its unique role and where it could provide support or add value across tenures, like it has for the yellow crazy ant program, (noting 85% of the World Heritage Area is national park, 10% is freehold and private leases and the rest is other smaller tenures). Key actions in Strategy 1 include:

- 1.1. Develop climate change adaptation plan. The Plan was released last year and includes 3 goals and 27 actions that also incorporate the Board's 10 point plan.
- 1.2. Biosecurity taskforce. The need for more coordination was recognised, particularly for Phytophthora, Myrtle rust and Feral pigs.
- 1.3. Yellow Crazy Ant eradication.
- 1.4. Recovery of threatened species. The Authority plays a support role rather than a lead role. Reef Assist funding is helping to helping with job creation, restoration and threatened species work.
- 1.5. Rehabilitate degraded areas to improve the integrity of the Area. This work is focused on implementing the Climate Change Adaptation Plan in areas adjacent to the World Heritage Area. The Blue Green Economic Stimulus Package and Reef Assist can address this. This work also needs to continue a focus on mountain top work.
- 1.6. Fire management. Reviewing planned burn guidelines across the national parks is reflected in our partnership agreement with QPWS. There was talk about putting together an Indigenous reference group to look at these planned guidelines. This action also supports cultural knowledge systems and involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal People in traditional burning practices. The Authority provided a grant to Gungandji Mandingalbay Yidinji to develop a cultural fire management plan at Budda Baddoo as part of their Master Planning process.

The board identified that it would be useful for the Wet Tropics and GBRF Traditional Owners to have a joint meeting to develop and negotiate processes for co-designing data sharing agreements, particularly around traditional burning practices.

#### **Action:**

- Leslie to meet with GBRF during next visit re: Traditional Owner engagement

#### **4.2. Climate action and initiatives including the Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package**

Senior Science Officer, Ellen Weber, introduced the Authority's Climate Adaptation Plan. In April 2019 Professor Steve Williams presented data to a group on the tableland presenting the plight of endemic species faster than predicted. The board developed a statement and ten-point plan for climate action to do something about it in the World Heritage Area. The board secured investment to fund a senior science position, initiate a community of practice and develop a climate adaptation plan 'Accept Act Adapt'. The Plan was launched in November 2019 and includes 3 goals: 1) a community of practice and a planning framework; 2) no regret actions; and 3) transformative actions that we know we need to do. Actions include:

- Citizen science
- Community grants program
- Improving landscape resilience through a trip to Mount Lewis, work with the herbarium and auspicing a \$2.6 million Reef Assist grant on behalf of Gungandji Mandingalbaj Yidinji, North Queensland Land Management Services, Ma Mu Aboriginal Corporation, Abiculture and Dulabed and Malanbarra Yidinji. Reef Assist supports 31 jobs doing land, conservation and monitoring activities.
- A Terms of Reference was drafted at the recent SAC meeting for a climate Initiatives investment working group. The Authority is working with the Land Restoration Fund team in Brisbane to help improve the program guidelines. Also working closely with Queensland Trust for Nature, South Endeavour Trust, Terrain NRM and QPWS to prepare a restoration plan in anticipation of the next round of funding.
- In March this year the Authority held a Creating our Climate future workshop to lead a collaborate voice around climate action. COVID-19 arrived a week later. During the lock down we looked at how to make the environment and the economy more resilient. Working with Terrain NRM and CAFNEC we collaboratively developed the Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package with other key partners. Green and Blue includes 2 parts and 3 components: 1) boots on the ground 2) fins in the water and 3) transformative actions – creating the smart green capital in Australia. Meetings held with Council and other partners to discuss clean jobs. Green and Blue supports community led processes and works across sectors with backers from industry. The approach is to identify priority projects then work on how to get them funded. The governance model is determined by the funding purpose. Funding can come from the government, private and philanthropic sources.

The Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package is the investment framework. There are \$73 million dollars of projects in the appendix. The board would like 2-4 relevant projects be developed up so they can advocate for them. The Authority is currently developing a restoration plan for Land Restoration Fund and a work program for the Climate Adaptation Plan.

The Authority's Annual Report and State of Wet Tropics reports were submitted to both Environment Ministers by 30 September 2020. They have been tabled in the Australian Parliament so are now public documents and are on the Authority's website. When they are tabled in the Queensland parliament the documents will be officially launched and the Authority will prepare some media about what we will do about climate change. The Authority's responsibilities with IUCN reporting, UNESCO reporting and Commonwealth State of the Environment Reporting were also discussed.

#### **Resolution**

The Board **noted** progress in delivering the Wet Tropics Climate Adaptation Plan 2020-2030.

#### **Action:**

- Ensure Board 114 Board agenda includes discussion on State of Wet Tropics

- Share a copy of the last State of Wet Tropics report with Terry Janke and Joe Morrison, given that they will part of the Indigenous writing team for the State of Environment reporting; and to explore the opportunity for engagement in the development in the Indigenous component
- Develop a restoration plan in preparation for the Land Restoration Fund, and a work program for the adaptation plan to meet the board's request of 2-4 projects that they can lobby investment for.

#### **4.3. Yellow crazy ant eradication program overview and update**

The Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program is in year 5 of the proposed ten-year plan. The program was originally established in 2013, although the ten-year plan started in 2016. We are in the middle of a three-year funding program. The program has received \$18 million of Commonwealth and state funding, and \$3.5 million of in-kind support. The program is demonstrating strong on-ground outcomes, strong stakeholder, community and industry support. It is supported by a large team, contractors and research contracts.

The program is on track for eradication. Eradication is achieved through detection, broad scale treatment, delimitation, spot treatments then monitoring. The Authority should have most of the area cleaned up by 2026. Current priorities include getting the right team in place for the April to July surveys. The main focus for 2021 is to continue to show on-ground outcomes, raise the profile of the project in the community, get local, state and federal members on board, then campaign for further funding through radio, television and social media.

A recent independent review identified that the program continues to remain feasible as long as we continue to see success in treatment efficacy when ant numbers are low and also to be able to manage human assisted spread with the sugar industry.

Other updates include:

- Success with putting the yellow crazy ant program forward as a Prime Minister's case study.
- Decision for the YCA team to combine office space, with all staff working out of the shed.
- Production of a yellow crazy ant program annual report card
- Fury the detector dog, particularly her ability to detect yellow crazy ants in low density areas where the survey teams were not picking them up. Hoping to get another three detector dogs.

The board identified the need to commence development of a strategic communications plan in the lead up to the program's funding expiring in June 2022. The Authority's effort to support people in other places to deal with new outbreaks of yellow crazy ant infestations coming in from overseas is an important role in also protecting the World Heritage Area given the different genetics of those species.

QPWSP Executive Director, James Newman, advised the board that the Authority has been awarded the Weeds Society of Queensland Queensland's Pest Animal Team Award for achieving exceptional results in Queensland. Directors congratulated the Authority's staff on this achievement through the yellow crazy ant program.

#### **Resolution**

The Board **noted** the overview and update on the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program.

#### **Action:**

- Commence development of a strategic communications plan in the lead up to funding expiring in June 2022.

#### **4.4. Strategy 2—background briefing**

Manager World Heritage Connections, Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez, introduced Strategy two, supporting Rainforest Aboriginal People and the team supporting the delivery of this strategy. The team works with Rainforest Aboriginal People and engagement takes many forms. Our focus is on embedding a rights-based approach in our work. A key mechanism is through the Authority's Indigenous Advisory Members, that is the two Indigenous Directors on the Board members (three with Chrissy Grant now included), the two Indigenous members on the CCC and the two Indigenous members on the SAC. This also includes gender balance to ensure cultural protocols. These six key members form what was previously called the Traditional Owner Leadership Group and is now called the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Strategic Custodial Think Tank (RAPSCTT). The group also has invited participants includes Allison Halliday and previously Chrissy Grant. The group also includes Barry Hunter as the Terrain NRM director.

- 2.1. Implementing a rights-based approach. This is about ensuring Rainforest Aboriginal People's rights are understood and everything that comes out of the Authority includes cultural clearance.
- 2.2. Supporting and coordinating the implementation of the refreshed Regional Agreement. The 2005 Regional Agreement was historically significant for Rainforest Aboriginal People. It provides for the cooperative management of the World Heritage Area. 87% of the area is now covered by native title and other Aboriginal land interests. The 2007 regional forum resulted in a commitment for an Indigenous led process to refresh the Regional Agreement and mandated the Traditional Owner Leadership Group to do this work. It's now proposed that this work progress through a supplementary agreement for the next two years with additional investment. COVID-19 has significantly impacted engagement and resulted in the main roadshow and regional forum being cancelled in 2020. These will be picked up in 2021.
- 2.3. Empower Rainforest Aboriginal People's wellbeing and livelihoods. Includes the Rainforest Aboriginal Newsletter and Rainforest Aboriginal Grants program. \$40,000 has been available through the grants program to support projects up to \$10,000. The Authority also sponsored the DES Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger conference welcoming event.
- 2.4. Support and uphold and strengthen Rainforest Aboriginal People's ability to uphold their customary relationships with their landscape. Mainly led through the Planning and Conservation team. Involves supporting Eastern Kuku Yalanji land tenure negotiations and Aboriginal land use master planning processes.

#### **4.5. Empower Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples livelihoods and wellbeing update**

Senior Project Officer, Alicia Haines, reported that COVID-19 has impacted engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal People. The following outcomes have been achieved:

- Three editions of Rainforest Aboriginal News have been released. Another edition will be released in December.
- Five projects were supported in round 1 of the Rainforest Aboriginal Grants with 2019-20 funding and five projects were supported in round two with 2020-21 funds.
- Recent engagements have been with Malenbarra Yidinji and Mandingalbay Yidinji to see the result of previous Rainforest Aboriginal Grant investments.
- The 2021 Calendar will feature quotes and images about climate change from a traditional perspective, although there are risks with meeting the print timeframe.
- The Our Collective Journey video has been finalised and will be promoted on social media and shared with partners.

The board identified that the Australian Government has released '[Dhawura Ngilan: A vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia and the Best Practice Standards in Indigenous Cultural Heritage Management and Legislation](#)' and the opportunity to implement the findings in the Authority's work.

## Resolution

The Board **noted** the activities and tasks the Authority has undertaken over the year to engage with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples.

### Action:

- Consider how we can implement the [Dhawura Ngilan: A vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia and the Best Practice Standards in Indigenous Cultural Heritage Management and Legislation](#) findings in our work

## 4.6. Regional Agreement and RAPSCTT update

Senior Project Officer, Alicia Haines, identified the main issues for progressing this work:

- COVID-19 has significantly impacted engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal People.
- State government elections
- Risks with meeting timeframes to develop the Supplementary Agreement by August 2020
- The Terrain MOU expired 30 September, impacting funding arrangements for RAPSCTT meetings. \$20,000 will be included in the next MOU with Terrain for three online meetings and one face to face meeting. There are funding shortfalls for legal advice. Terrain administers an NIAA grant for RAPSCTT and this funding covers out of session costs and project officer fees.
- NQLC withdrew their partnerships after the 2019 regional forum and the current budget doesn't cover independent legal advice. Lines of communication have been left open with staff although there is no communication between RAPSCTT and the NQLC board.

Other updates included:

- Funding to cover Jim Petrich's costs come from a contingency budget. Jim has included a significant amount of pro bono support.
- RAPSCTT is meeting with Ken Wyatt and Bob Katter in the next week.
- Next year RAPSCTT's focus will be on meeting with State Ministers.
- Considering May 2021 for the next Regional Forum.

## Resolution

The Board:

- **Noted** the key developments with the Regional Agreement since board meeting 112 and the Special Board meeting on 24 September 2020.
- **Noted** the issues and risks to finalising the Supplementary Agreement.

### Action:

- Canvas idea with RAPSCTT members about re-engaging with the NQLC Board with the Supplementary Agreement.
- Opportunity for the next regional Rainforest Aboriginal People's to be aligned with the Board's May meeting

## 4.7. Implementing a rights-based approach including human rights and native title obligations

Manager Aboriginal Partnerships, Rebecca Lagerroth, and Senior Planning Officer, Eli Taylor, introduced themselves to directors and passed on an apology from Principal Planner, Julie Colman.

It was explained that a rights-based approach is about looking at how we work with Rainforest Aboriginal People, to understand their rights and to realise their participation in the work that we do. Using Free Prior and Informed Consent processes is an important way of achieving this. Peter Larsen identified four categories linked to rights in a world heritage area context:

- Land, property and resource rights

- Participation and consultation
- Livelihood and development rights
- Minority groups, Indigenous peoples and their cultural rights

A project plan is in place to address native title and human rights work to February 2021. A roadmap will then be prepared by 30 June 2020 to guide rights-based work to 2030.

The *Native Title Act* recognises and protects native title rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The *Native Title Act* established timelines and processes to address past acts, intermediate acts and future acts in a valid way. The Authority is tightening up processes to meet these processes, which is quite different to the way other agencies address native title because the Authority doesn't own land and works across multiple tenures.

An overview of how the Queensland Government Native Title Work Procedures Assessment Pathway was applied in a practical Wet Tropics World Heritage Area context. One permit from the Authority could trigger multiple future acts. Prior to issuing a permit for an activity, the Authority needs to consider the activity, the underlying tenure and the modules triggered. The Native Title Work Procedures afford different rights for each situation e.g. to veto, or to notify, or to proceed without notification. The development of Operational Guidelines will provide examples to will help staff undertake the native title assessments process correctly.

The Authority has not undertaken an audit of past permits although they are not alone in this situation. The grant of these permits will still be valid under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1994* however they may be invalid under the Native Title Act 1994. The liability is being addressed at a state level rather than by individual State agencies.

The board acknowledged how resource intensive it is to undertake a Native Title assessment properly and suggested that the Authority be involved in the same discussions QPWS&P is having about charging a reasonable fee to the proponent. The Wet Tropics Management Plan does include a mechanism to charge fees.

The board also recognised the resource requirement on the Native Title holder who is commenting on Future Act Notifications. The Native Title Act does allow Prescribed Bodies Corporates to charge a fee for specific modules, although this does not apply to native title applicants. The current rate approved by the Queensland Government is approximately \$560 although a PBC has the option to bill for the actual cost. PBC bills over \$2,000 can be referred to ORIC for consideration of whether the cost is reasonable. In joint management negotiations, a simpler process exists under the Indigenous Land Use Agreements and Indigenous Management Agreements. There is a procedure to notify through the joint management committee to streamline the process.

Key points to note include:

- Permits granted between 1 January 1994 and 1 June 2020 are unlikely to have complied with the Native Title Act and may be invalid, however a full audit has not been undertaken.
- There are 21 current maintenance permits
- Historically issued approximately 2-3 permits for new infrastructure each year.
- New permits granted since June 2020 have complied with the Native Title Act and the Queensland Government native title work procedures.
- The amendment of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 was treated as a future act and notices were sent to all native title parties within the Area in addition to extensive consultation and regional forums.
- Draft of the Operational Guidelines by the end of January. Arrangement with Crown Law to review the operational guidelines.

ILUA's, CMA's and Regional Agreement that the Authority is a signatory to.

Agreement	Name	Expiry date
Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)	Djiru People Protected Areas ILUA	30 June 2021
	Eastern Kuku Yalanji, the State of Queensland & Wet Tropics Management Authority - Freehold Grants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastern Yalanji, Queensland and Harlow ILUA</li> <li>• Eastern Yalanji, Queensland and Burungu Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) ILUA</li> <li>• Eastern Yalanji, Queensland and Bana Mindilji Aboriginal Corporation (BMAC) ILUA</li> </ul>	Not specified <i>Written agreement</i> <i>Written agreement</i> <i>Not specified</i>
	Eastern Kuku Yalanji, the State of Queensland & Wet Tropics Management Authority - National Parks	Not specified
	Gugu Badhun People Protected Areas ILUA	11/01/2033
	Mamu Protected Areas ILUA	30/10/2023
	Tableland Yidinji Protected Areas ILUA	25/10/2023
	Wanyurr Majay People Protected Areas ILUA	30/06/2021
	Warrungnu Protected Area ILUA	4/10/2023
	Yarrabah Protected Areas ILUA	In perpetuity unless written agreement
Cooperative Management Agreements	Conservation Agreement and Cooperative Management Agreement for Eastern Kuku Yalanji Nature Refuge areas (Yellow Zone)	In perpetuity
	Cooperative Management Agreement for Eastern Kuku Yalanji community development (Freehold grants ILUA/Pink Zone)	In perpetuity
	Cooperative Management Agreement to allow the construction of the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation Ranger Base in Ayton on a freehold block where zoning prohibits the construction of a structure.	In perpetuity
Other Agreements	The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement	On-going

There are a number of outdated policies that the Authority has, particularly in relation to the range of Aboriginal land interests in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. A new "Working with Aboriginal People particularly concerned with the land in the Wet Tropics" policy will be developed to develop clear positions on how we address matters such as native title, cultural heritage, return to country, joint management, benefit sharing etc.

The *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019* includes 23 human rights. The Authority is required to have:

- a customer complaints management policy and procedure in place that includes an option to make human rights complaints. A draft policy is in development.
- information on the website and in the annual report.
- operational guidelines to support staff with making decisions that are compatible with human rights. The board paper template will be updated to reflect this.
- further information, training and support for staff to make sure that we are doing this well.
- Human Rights Certificate prepared for the Wet Tropics Management Plan. Need to do one for the Act review also.
- All policies and procedures assessed for compatibility with the Human Rights Act. An internal Audit of policies and procedures revealed that a lot are outdated. Need to go through a process to determine which ones can be archived, which ones can be reviewed and updated and which ones we should lean on DES for.



- A document that explains the whole governance framework/structure.
- Naming conventions to call policy documents by their right names.

Developing a road map to implement a right- based approach will commence early in the new year. We are currently addressing native title, human rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Free Prior and Informed Consent. The Aboriginal partnership team is supporting all staff with culturally appropriate engagement. We are constantly learning about Traditional Owner decision making processes. Staff are working collaboratively with QPWS&P to support the Application for Research Endorsement trial. A key priority is to map out what the next period of time to 2030 looks like and to be clear about what we want to achieve. An intern undertook a review of international rights-based work for us last year. The intern recommended that the Authority follow Peter Larsen's 6 Stage process. Since then DES has launched the Gurra Framework. We need to consider what is going to work for us and co-design a process with Rainforest Aboriginal People.

The Board thanked Rebecca and Eli for working through these issues so methodically and with conviction, and for a well thought out presentation. The board recognised that there will be situations where native title and human rights do conflict and that free prior and informed consent processes will be essential to finding culturally appropriate resolution. The board requested that intellectual property rights are also considered in the Authority's rights-based approach. An Intellectual Property Advisory Committee has been established at the National level to provide leadership in this space.

Acting Assistance Director, DAWE, Jacqui Dunlop advised Directors that it's not accurate to say that Heritage listing wouldn't affect native title rights. It may. With the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act review, there is an opportunity to consider interactions with the Native Title Act. Listings post 1996 are much harder to validate under the Native Title Act.

### Resolution

The Board **noted** steps being taken to implement a rights-based approach and ensure the Authority meets its legislative obligations under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) and the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld).

### Actions:

- James Newman to talk to Tim Collins about including WTMA in ILUA re-negotiations with Rainforest Aboriginal People in the World Heritage Area, and being a signatory with QPWS&P, wherever possible
- Jacqui Dunlop took question from the Chair on notice - Is the Commonwealth doing any examination of native title or whether it has complied?

### 4.8. Recap and close for the day

The Chair acknowledged the two Awards received by the Authority and provided an overview of the agenda items for day two of the board meeting. Meeting closed at 4.48pm

## Day 2

### 4.9. Strategy 3—background briefing

Principal Communications Advisor, Jeannette Wormald, introduced herself to the Board. The media and communications team includes Gretchen (youth engagement and web), Aaron (journalist, videographer, photographer), Jeanette (journalist, strategic adviser) and Jodie (editing, style, tourism). There has been significant change in the way we engage with COVID-19.

Manager World Heritage Connections, Saskia Salmeron Rodriguez, provided an overview of the Involving the community Strategy that includes actions to:

- Empower volunteers and support community contributions to World Heritage management. Recognise contributions through the Cassowary Awards. Attend a number of events throughout the region, including the YCA comms team. Communications strategy to increase profile of the Authority and improve consistent messaging across products. Deliver social media in a structured way.
- Support our statutory and non-statutory commits to empower them to participate in decision making. Includes supporting the CCC and SAC providing advice to the board. RAPSCCT.
- Deliver at least 5 high profile education and awareness campaigns to influence attitudes and behavior. Two smashed avocado breakfast events. All events were cancelled this year due to COVID-19.
- Revitalise the Wet Tropics youth engagement program. Will be running a workshop with the CCC over the next coming weeks. Revitalising the Authority's website and developing a seasonal calendar app targeting primary school users. Looking at how to get the app and lesson plans into the school curriculum. Opportunities include Rainforest Aboriginal culture, natural values and climate change.

The board identified an opportunity to develop teacher ambassadors who could support teachers. Also the opportunity to approach Education Queensland to build a Wet Tropics World Heritage Area project for schools like GBRMPA have done.

**Action:**

- Advise CCC members immediately that Dr Sally Driml will be the new CCC Chair.

**4.10. Communications strategy and engagement approach**

Strategic Communications Advisor, Jeanette Wormald, provided an overview of current communication activities and results. A combination of livestreaming and physical attendance at events has increased engagement beyond expectations. Face to face community engagement remains crucial to empower communities and give them the skills to protect and manage the Area. The Authority has COVID-19 safe measures in place for engagement activities. Science and Smashed Avocadoes launched off the back of science in the pub in a COVID friendly format and engaged a virtual audience through live Q&A:

- First event - more than 400 people watched the first event. Full venue plus online audience. 1,500 posts.
- Second event - more than 200 watched second event. Full venue plus online audience. 200 posts.
- Next event scheduled for 3 March – word wildlife day

The Authority has started to communicate creatively and energetically on virtual platforms by bringing the Wet Tropics into people's home offices with virtual Wet Tropics backdrops in Teams. Moving imagery is also used in Zoom meetings to engage people and promote the universal values of the Area.

High quality digital content is maintained to create a visual narrative for digital engagement. By 2022, 88% of all online content will be video content (i.e. moving imagery, not static photographs) according to a Cisco study. With this approach, the demographic has changed from above 50 years of age to below 50 years of age with more women than men. A Linked-in social media channel has also been introduced.

A draft Communications Strategy has been prepared to guide the Authority in creating and delivering a strong corporate identity, brand and voice which is immediately identifiable to a local, national and international audience. It is guiding effective digital engagement and enabling the Authority to develop timely on point messaging and communications products in challenging times.

The brand we are presenting is 'the world's oldest continuously living tropical rainforest' and 'a world heritage icon that belongs to the world and needs to be protected'. There is opportunity for staff and the Board to have further input into the brand and key messages.

The board identified an opportunity to discuss the brand and key messages further at their strategic planning workshop in February 2021 and requested that key stakeholders be asked for advice also. The chair acknowledged that the timing of COVID-19 wasn't ideal although the timing of the arrival of new team was. It has given it a chance to look at things differently. The level of professionalism and engaging messaging that has come as a result is exceeding our expectations of where we can go. The board in the past has been talking very strongly about the need for a communications strategy.

Acting Assistance Director, DAWE, Jacquie Dunlop, identified that it would be useful to share the Communications Strategy with other World Heritage Sites once its finalised.

### Resolution

The Board **noted** the progress in the development of a 'Wet Tropics Management Authority Communications Strategy 2020-2022'; and the progress of engagement activities and adaptive delivery in response to COVID.

### Actions:

- Share the draft communications strategy with the board once staff are comfortable with it
- Board to work on key messages at their strategic planning workshop:
  - Who are we?
  - What the Authority does (the role it plays)?
  - Who do we want to present ourselves to?
  - What is the value proposition that we want to offer to our clients?Particularly noting the end of funding rounds in 2023
- Ask key stakeholders prior to the Board's strategic planning workshop:
  - What will make us unique and critical moving forward?
  - Are there any issues that we need to address?
  - How would you describe who we are and what we do?

#### 4.11. 18<sup>th</sup> Cassowary Awards

Strategic Communications Advisor, Jeanette Wormald, advised the board that there are a number of challenges ahead with the Cassowary Awards:

- Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park has closed down so another venue needs to be found that meets COVID regulations.
- The proposed date, 18 April (World Heritage Day) and the need to consider a date in June to allow time for the nomination and assessment process
- Need the capacity for virtual and physical delivery to maximise success of the Awards.
- Traditional sponsorship base has been the tourism and small business sector which may be a challenge due to COVID-19.

The board suggested that the Cassowary Awards be delivered differently this year. An outdoor event (e.g. Fogarty Park or other locations outside of Cairns that are in the World Heritage Area) was requested given the COVID restrictions. This presents the opportunity for the Awards to be an open event with stalls that create business opportunities. It was identified that the Authority would need

to have an approved COVID-19 plan signed off by government for such an event although grants may be available for this style of event.

The board supported hosting a Cassowary Awards and asked the communications team to come back to the board with proposed options for timing and a suitable venue for the Cassowary Award to avoid COVID-19 disrupting it. The Board thanks the communications team for the work they have done.

#### **Resolution**

The board **endorses** the proposed timing of the 18th Cassowary Awards, and investigations into venues and format.

#### **Action:**

- Develop a board paper for February with proposed options.

#### **4.12. Strategy 4—background briefing**

Chris Jahansen joined the board and introduced himself to Directors. Manager World Heritage Connections, Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez, introduced Strategy 4 that is about making sure the Authority is recognised internationally and nationally as a leader in best practice presentation and promoting the Area as a natural and cultural tourism destination. The Authority wants to promote and encourage people to experience the Area, appreciate it and become ambassadors for the Area and support Rainforest Aboriginal People to have their own Indigenous tourism enterprises. Actions include:

- Promoting a world class Wet Tropics brand. Work with TTNQ and Tourism Australia to promote the Area. Pooling resources to deliver better outcomes. Worked with Cairns Aquarium to secure Australian Heritage Grant to develop interpretive signage.
- Improving visitor experience. Collaborating with industry and Rainforest Aboriginal People to develop interpretive products. Rainforest Aboriginal Grants provided to Mandingalbay Yidinji to upgrade a walking track; to Buluwai Indigenous Corporation to develop a handbook for Indigenous led tourism; and to Jumbun Limited to hold Rainforest Aboriginal Eco-network training workshop.
- Supporting capacity of Wet Tropics champions. Supporting Wet Tropics Tour Guides program delivered by Savannah Guides and how to enhance it. Ambassador Program now delivered online.
- Supporting increased natural and cultural tourism opportunities. Implement the tourism destination plan.

79% of Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is national park. The Partnership Agreement with QPWSP includes a number of tourism related actions.

#### **4.13. Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan**

Tourism Project Manager, Chris Jahansen, provided an outline of the four-step process – discovery, definition, making our solutions, delivering it. The workshops have highlighted that not only do we have an abundance of potential natural and cultural experiences at our finger tips, the assets, resources and knowledge, and collective drive is the key thing to achieve this.

The Authority has spoken to 120 individuals and representative bodies and held 6 workshops. The Plan development is in its final stages. The key thing is that Rainforest Aboriginal People, tourism, Government and Industry work together if we want a resilient and sustainable tourism future. The Authority can play a key role in creating connectivity and funding opportunities.

Sustainable tourism is the powerful force that also drives conservation outcomes. The three pillars to the Plan include:

1. Respect for country and custodial relationships
2. Community profile
3. Visitor experience

Chris provided an overview of the goals and strategies in the Plan. The Ambassador Program and the tourism industry could help raise the profile of the Area as the second most irreplaceable area on the planet. The Board identified that clear key messages for presenting the World Heritage Area is one of the most important challenges for them to address.

The Sustainable Tourism Plan also identified the opportunity to connect people to awareness of conservation and the opportunity for industry to transition to zero emissions and zero waste. Consistency, quality and credibility of guides could be improved. 70 certified guides produced so far. Opportunities to develop the guides further.

Who is the plan for?

Tourism Investors – are you going to approve me to do one of the activities listed in one of the sites. Is the plan going to tell me enough about the process I need to go through to tell if it is an appropriate activity.

RAPSCCTT – where it is, where is it going and who is it for. There needs to be some sort of guide for someone who is going to do an activity. Concerns about the bastardisation of cultural values against economic values. It raises critical issues for Rainforest Aboriginal People whether they want to start their own business or want to have their own Guides. Steps to Sustainable Tourism Published BY DEH in 2004 – steps and processes that you are talking about. Chrissy lending copy to Chris.

A visitor promise, drafted by the Steering Committee, sits in the plan and ties it all together. The Board requested that the promise goes one step further and calls for Wet Tropics ambassadors.

Actions included in the plan. A three-year review will ensure the Plan remains relevant. The plan is due on the 31 December 2020. Will be receiving QPWS feedback on the 5 December.

What's the purpose? A plan to guide WTMA or a plan to guide WTMA and partners? Need to establish what the plan is all about at the front e.g. Exec summary. A diagram to explain the process that people need to follow. This is something that will enhance what is already in place. Opportunity to include a case study of a Rainforest Aboriginal tourism good news story.

The Board acknowledged the great work Chris has undertaken to develop this plan in a COVID-19 environment. Directors like the direction, the quality and conditions in certain areas. It was recognised that monitoring and adaptation is most expensive area. Although having a platform for people to follow up allows adjustment of tourism operations and is a great way, at low cost, to have an early warning system.

#### **Resolution:**

The Board **endorsed** the way that the Sustainable Tourism Plan work is heading and requested that the final copy be provided to the board for approval out of session following final comments from stakeholders and QPWSP.

#### **Actions:**

- The board provided the following feedback on the draft Sustainable Tourism Plan:
  - Use the text on the second slide in the powerpoint presentation as a text box, and the 'Issue in a few words' on the next slide in another text box, in the Plan
  - Include the Strategy wording in the goals section to make the linkages clearer

- Adventure tourism should be put in a different context to fit in with the rest of the document e.g. active Ecotourism or nature-based tourism context
- Seek input from Phil Rist re: concerns about cultural values against economic values.
- How can non-Indigenous guides tell the story or have that permission to tell the story. Clarify and expand a bit to help people using the Plan.
- Include a preamble for the regulatory setting and reference to the QPWS tourism strategy and Ecotourism Strategy – operators will require a commercial activity permit on national parks.
- Current and future revenue models – needs a context about managing the impacts of visitor use and providing and maintaining infrastructure to support activities that are necessary to ensure presentation befitting a World heritage area. Drop state-wide from user-fees it is outside out remit. Insert a text box on how the Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package links to component two (zero emission and zero waste)

#### **4.14. Wet Tropics tour guide and Ambassador program**

Senior Project Officer, Terry Carmichael, introduced himself to Directors and provided the background on the Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program. The Tour Guide School and Ambassador Program are run in partnership with Savannah Guides.

The Ambassador Guide was funded by a Commonwealth grant and it is running virtually. It is an entry level program that was developed in partnership between Savannah Guides and the Authority.

The Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program was originally developed as a professional development program for guides working in the industry and is now open to a broader audience. The requirement is to attend a 2 day training program and a 2 day field school, then present a 30 minute tour to become a certified Wet Tropics Tour Guide. The most recent guide school was held at the Daintree. Its unfortunate that the Paluma Guide School had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. We have 70 certified guides and 240 people who have participated in the Guide Program. Tourism is seasonal and people in the industry are affected by events such as Covid-19.

Terry also outlined the Ecotourism Australia certification requirements for ecotourism businesses.

The Guides learn invaluable knowledge from a diverse range of experts in the Wet Tropics region. A lot of experts volunteer their time to share their knowledge with the Guide School. The goal is to motivate and inspire guides to build their knowledge about the Wet Tropics plants and animals further. Guide schools are a great way to network people. Sharing skills and learning from each other is part of the journey.

We are going to put all the training online and make it available 24/7 to make the materials more accessible for all people. Tour Guides don't have the time to analyse and synthesis scientific information. That is Authority's role. Guides need to know the latest news about climate change and bushfires and what they can do and how they can give back in those destinations that are affected.

The Board acknowledged the strong role guides play in the Sustainable Tourism Plan. The Board thanked Terry for providing such a comprehensive overview of the history and of how the program works. The Board acknowledged that the Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program is highly regarded right across the Wet Tropics and they support its continuation. Guides pay to participate in the program and the Authority subsidises the Program.

Manager, Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez, advised the Board that the Authority has approval for a dedicated Tourism Officer in 2021. The position will be advertised as an internal EOI through DES.



### **Resolution:**

The Board **noted** the continued delivery of the Wet Tropics Ambassador Program and Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program through Savannah Guides and the development of an 'on Country' guide training program for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples will be subject to outcomes of the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan.

#### **4.15. Strategy 5—background briefing**

Manager Planning and Conservation, Tim Wong, introduced Strategy 5 which is about minimizing impacts on the integrity World Heritage values. Strategy 5 speaks to the Authority's core business and important statutory function. Tim spoke about Wet Tropics legislation and tenure of the World Heritage Area. A core component of what the Authority does is regulating community services and other infrastructure across the World Heritage Area. Some of the infrastructure on park is regulated under the Nature Conservation Act. QPWS&P does most of the compliance on the National Park estate and the Authority does compliance on other tenures (e.g. freehold) within the World Heritage Area.

- 5.1 Supporting appropriate CSI infrastructure in the area. We approve 3-5 a year, includes a pre-application meeting. Approved the Wangetti trail earlier this year. Auditing of permit conditions for 21 maintenance permits that are on-going (e.g. with transport and main roads and ergon). Also managing native title assessment requirements.
- 5.2. Undertake a renewed program of strategic compliance. Came out of the strategic consultation we had with QPWS&P. Under Partnership Agreement, supporting more compliance training for Indigenous Ranger Groups (\$35,000 in budget for this year) and capacity building in both directions for on-ground compliance patrols. Regulating commercial activity permits.
- 5.3 Support negotiations of Cooperative Management Agreements to agree to activities that are not otherwise legal in a particular zone. We can negotiate with any stakeholder who has an interest in the land as long as it has a net benefit for the World Heritage Area. Moving forward it is a tool we can use to facilitate return to country aspirations for Traditional Owners.
- 5.4. Ensuring Wet Tropics legislative context is contemporary and best practice. Successful review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan. Followed a three plus year review process. Next will be the review of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993. And a body of work to update the statutory guidelines under the management plan.

#### **4.16. Wet Tropics Management Plan implementation and amendments to the Act**

Julie Colman introduced herself to Directors. Eli Taylor provided an overview of the Wet Tropics Management Plan, the existing Statutory Guidelines that need to be reviewed and the new guidelines to be developed. The Wet Tropics Management Plan is a regulation and the key tool for managing the area. It establishes a management zones based on management purpose, that covers all the underlying tenures. The Management Plan prohibits a series of activities which might impact the Outstanding Universal Values of the World Heritage Area. The Management Plan then allows some emergency activities without a permit. Then the Plan establishes a list of activities that require a permit. The plan also allows cooperative management agreements in any zones, and a rezoning process.

Eli provided information on Zone A (highest level of protection, Zone b (buffer) and Zone c (around infrastructure). The main purpose of zones is to protect world heritage values and integrity. The second is where local governments and state government entities have appeal rights. The board plays a significant role in decisions about rezoning applications. Each of the zones outline the types of activities allowed in the zones.

Eli demonstrated how to use the interactive mapping tool on the Authority's website, noting that the public can now see where active Cooperative Management Agreements now exist. Rainforest

Aboriginal Advisory information is also available to access information on native title, IPAs and Rainforest Aboriginal People in the World Heritage Area. The penalty units in the Act and the Management Plan were also discussed.

The Management Plan review commenced in 2017. Triggered by a ten-year review under the Act. There were two phases of public consultation. It was recommended to be approved by Ministerial Council, Cabinet and Governor in Council. The Chair advised that the Management Plan had been reviewed once previously, there was a change in government, and when it went to cabinet it was not approved.

Now that we have a new plan the key is to ensure we are implementing it well. Eleven local governments in the area. The Management Plan prevails over planning schemes. Local Governments need to be making decisions that are consistent with the Management Plan. The awareness of how the plan applies has faded within Local Governments so the Authority has started working more closely with Local Governments to remind them of their obligations. A session with Douglas Shire Council recently was very positive.

Zone D was amalgamated into Zone C. The Conservation sector saw this as a watering down of protections across the protected area estate to allow for privatization. The Authority recognised the value in the concerns they raised. In zone C high level of consideration of the type of development anticipated the area. Also provided greater clarity on the definitions of limited visitor infrastructure and developed visitor infrastructure. We also went through the whole plan and made sure the test of world heritage values and integrity was consistent throughout. We want to test permits and cooperative management agreements and guidelines and there is a list of more guidelines we need to develop. A template has been developed a template to have a more detailed policy expression of what we're developing.

Guidelines are not a compulsory enforceable instrument and they are not subordinate legislation. The Authority has 12 guidelines that are mostly about practical matters such as the construction of roads, electricity, infrastructure, water supply etc. They are all guidelines under Section 62 of the Management Plan and matters for which permits are applied. The Authority must produce a guideline for these matters.

The prioritised list of existing and proposed new guidelines includes:

No.	Guideline	Priority
0.	Template Guideline	High
NEW GUIDELINES		
1.	S14 – Procedure amending zoning map	Low
2.	S16 – Minor change to zone boundary	Medium
3.	S27A – keeping a dog or cat	Low
4.	S27C – Keeping honey bees	Low
5.	S28 – Minor and Inconsequential Impacts (see existing)	Medium
6.	S42 – Cooperative Management Agreements	High
7.	S62 – World heritage values and integrity	High
8.	S62 – reconfiguring a lot	High
9.	S62 – community services infrastructure (CSI)	Low
10.	S62 Visitor infrastructure	Medium
11.	S62 – protecting life and property not in an emergency	Medium
12.	S62 translocating fish	Low



EXISTING GUIDELINES FOR REVIEW		
0.	Determine the status of each existing guideline	High
1.	S28(4) - Minor and inconsequential impact	Medium
2.	S62 Definition of a Rainforest	Low
3.	S62 - Consulting with Rainforest Aboriginal people particularly concerned with land in the Area.	High
4.	S62 – Maintenance of Electricity Corridors and Infrastructure in Queensland’s Parks and Forests – Code of Practice	Medium
5.	S62 - Guideline for Seed Collection in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area	Low
6.	S62 - Guidelines for Community Consultation	High
7a.	S62 - Water Code of Practice	Medium
7b.	S62 - Water infrastructure code of practice – Field Guide	Low
8.	S62 - Guidelines For Use Of Motor Vehicles On ‘Presentation (Restricted)’ And ‘Management’ Roads In The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area	Medium
9a.	S62 - Roads in Rainforest - Best Practice Guidelines for Planning, Design and Management	Low
9b.	S62 - Roads in Rainforest: Science Behind the Guidelines	Low
9c.	S62 - Roads in Rainforest - Field Guide Road maintenance code of practice	Low

The Guidelines will come to the board for approval.

The relationship between integrity and ecological sustainability for natural areas is very clearly written into the Wet Tropics Management Plan now for permits and cooperative management agreements. It comes out of the Operational Guidelines for implementing the World Heritage Convention (section 90) where it talks about integrity in a World Heritage context. Activities must be consisted with the Outstanding Universal Values of the Area.

There are a lot of aspiration for return to country. Hoping to come up for a way to deal with these issues and the accumulative impact issues.

We are about to go through Act and amend it. A number of concepts and references need to be updated. We recognise that the Commonwealth wants to abolish Ministerial Council and we will need a resolution for that. Matters such as subdivision to make them work completely and section 57 exemptions that currently allows mining in the area where there is a license for mining. We will remove the intergovernmental scheme rather than include as a schedule. Change outdated references in the Nature Conservation Act. Discussing a change to the timing of State of Wet Tropics Reports. Reviewing the Authority’s compliance powers under the Act. Making the definition for Aboriginal tradition consistent with the Management Plan. Consequential amendment to the Land Titles Act to improve the way we implement the new permit for reconfiguring a lot.

Julie outlined the process to amendment an Act which could take at least eighteen months to run. The Chair also identified that it is possible to facilitate essential amendments on the back of something else, e.g. through an omnibus bill, also if needed. Important to weigh up what changes are essential and nice to have.

The Board thanked Eli and Julie for their presentation and acknowledged all the work being done in the Plan implementation and to prepare for the Act amendments.

#### **Resolution:**

The Board **noted** the significant workload for implementation of the recently amended Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998, and proposed review of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*.

**Actions:**

- Board directors to share information they're aware of on ecological sustainability in a World Heritage context, and tests for policy.
- Share a copy of Eli and Julie's presentation with directors so that links at the end of the presentation can be accessed.

**4.17 Gurra Framework update and DES World Heritage Strategy**

Angela Siggery acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the Wet Tropics and all World Heritage Areas across Queensland. Angela introduced the Gurra framework and the shared the acknowledgement of country included in the framework. This framework was developed over a twelve-month period by the DES Executive Leadership team a First Nations team and led by an external consultancy. It was an Indigenous led process with a vision to walk forward together from two paths to one in a partnership founded on respect, trust and First Nation's Peoples vision of Country and People. Its anchored in the foundation of our shared principles and values.

There is a value wheel in the framework that visually demonstrates what the ten initiatives are – includes a mixture of short-term, medium-term, long-term, high level, localised, internal and external initiatives. Gurra is a Kooma word Cheryl Leavy is a Kooma woman (from between St George and Cunnamulla). Gurra means 'everything' or 'all things'. The framework looks at workforce, procurement, cultural capability, governance, language and communication, structural reform, and agency specific measures. The Gurra Framework is currently being used within DES. An engagement strategy is being developed and a respectful language guide is being updated. These documents will encourage people to ask the question about what groups or communities prefer to be called locally.

Progress has included:

- Internal Governance approach approved by the Executive Leadership Team – working on a simple(ish) IT approach to reporting / capturing information that contributes to demonstrating progress
- Culturally appropriate recruitment and selection practices (First Nations involvement in recruitment)
- Five year First Nations Employment and Development Action Plan (Gap year, induction program, development pathways)
- Northern Parks and Forests Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy
- First Nations Mental Health Support officer program; 5 successfully trained Mental Health Support Officers so far
- All Senior Executives have cultural capability incorporated into their PDPs
- Significantly increased Indigenous procurement spend and created an Indigenous Procurement Hub
- Working with Traditional Owners to appropriately use Indigenous names for parks
- Design, develop and maintain Jawun – internal hub to increase staff understanding of First Nations culture, and contribute to stronger outcomes for community and Country. Jarwun is a Girramay word for 'basket'.
- Landmark reforms to the *Biodiscovery Act 2004* aligning to international protocols that ensure the benefits of biodiscovery are shared with First Nations peoples
- Collaborating with First Nations peoples in the delivery of ecotourism projects across Queensland to deliver on cultural heritage obligations and ensure ongoing economic development opportunities for First Nations peoples
- First Nations Climate Leadership Summit last year during Climate Week in 2019

- ESR is reframing the regulatory relationship with First Nations Councils in Queensland; co-designing opportunities to increase understanding, improve knowledge and practice and overcome barriers to legislative compliance
- ESR's State Investigations team is ensuring their processes and procedures include consideration of the Gurra Gurra Framework and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- Consideration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects when selecting public benefit order recipients, as part of litigation and court matters
- Protect public value by embedding cultural expertise in determining impact of environmental offences on Country, culture and community; driven through the department's Compliance Steering Committee
- Partnered with Indigenous Councils to develop Queensland's first Indigenous Waste Strategy; co-designed fit-for-purpose approach helping to identify and prioritise actions for local and regional solutions to managing waste and recovered resources
- Support the Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Traditional Owner Alliance and its progression as an independent body (initiative of 13 Traditional Owner groups from across the LEB)
- Commencing development of a co-stewardship model that will embody the partnerships we will implement to work with our First Nations partners
- Agreement-making Framework and Engagement Framework to support true, genuine and impactful partnerships with First Nations people
- Payments to First Nations people working with the Department of Environment and Science (DES) (Co-stewardship Payments)

The Gurra Framework did win a Department Award and is now up for a Premier Award.

Saskia Salmeron-Rodriguez mentioned how resourceful the Jarwun site is and that the Authority has shared a number of stories on there already, including the launch of the timeline video. The Authority also applies the Co-stewardship payments guideline outside existing arrangements.

Ahlia thanked the Board for the opportunity to join the meeting and introduced the draft Queensland World Heritage Strategy that DES is co-developing with First Nations people.

The four objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Set out the processes and procedures by which the Department is reframing its relationship with First Nations People through adopting a rights-based approach to the identification, nomination and management of World Heritage properties in alignment with international trends
2. Consider robust management adaptation strategies in the face of major global environmental events such as climate change
3. Provide a foundation for business continuity in the event of machinery of government changes or internal restructuring
4. Provide clarity for all interested parties around listing pathways.

The board asked that the Queensland World Heritage Strategy also consider what it can do to change the nomination process i.e. to add cultural values to the natural values without having to go through a complete renomination process. Another issue identified is that sometimes the assessment of values are misinterpreted by the people sent out to the areas so it's important that Indigenous people are involved in this process.

General focus areas of the Queensland World Heritage Strategy will include:

- Global comparative analysis
  - Complementary rather than competitive

- Lengthy and resource intensive process
  - Identify and explore opportunities to reduce or remove barriers to First Nations involvement
  - Explore innovative options to increase resources to progress more Traditional Owner led nominations (such as external investment)
- Recognition of threats
  - (especially climate change and frequency and intensity of significant climate events)
  - Explore adaptation of management practices to mitigate risks
- Increased First Nations involvement
  - Across all aspects of World Heritage
  - Explore engagement mechanisms and resourcing options

Ahlia shared a broad process and timeline of how the project will be delivered.

Part of the benefit that DES hopes will come from this is that the strategy will help to demystify World Heritage processes for Traditional Owners. The policy of the Strategy is that nothing will go ahead without Traditional Owner support/leadership. DES is not intending on consulting with DAWE and the World Heritage Committee for this Strategy because it is more about how Queensland is fulfilling its obligations in the process. The board identified that AHWAC would be interested in the Strategy and would like to see support for AHWIN being re-established in Queensland's Strategy.

The Chair recommended launching the Strategy where two World Heritage Properties lie side by side. There is a disconnect between what is seen as historic heritage for World Heritage and natural heritage and Indigenous cultural heritage. Its really difficult to fit into these boxes. DAWE is having these discussions with IUCN and ICOMOS.

The Board thanked Arlia and Angela and look forward to seeing this strategy progress. The Board appreciates that the Wet Tropics is included in the Strategy and is happy to continue participating in the process.

## **5. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **5.1. Budget status update**

Executive Director, Scott Buchanan, presented an overview of the Authority's budget as at November 2020. Overall the budget is on track given COVID-19. The Authority has had the same budget with no indexation since 2004. Staff numbers in the main office have decreased as a result of this. The Authority is continuing to do well with other grants e.g. Reef Assist.

WTMA and DES are collaborating to co-develop an Australian Heritage Grant focused on fire management and Indigenous knowledge.

At the next meeting the board will review the mid-year budget and business plan review.

### **5.2. Strategic risk register and risk appetite statement**

The Chair explained that the strategic risk register was developed because the board (as a statutory authority) has a different appetite for risk than the standard DES risk model. The board met and talked about the ranking. The risk appetite statement is to guide the board when making decisions.

When the board last developed its strategic directions, and how it tied to the Strategic plan. Will send this out for the next meeting.

The Strategic Risk register and risk appetite statement will be reviewed and updated at the Board's next meeting.

### 5.3. Confirm 2021 board meeting dates

- Board meeting #114: Wednesday 24 – Thursday 25 February 2021 (virtual meeting via zoom)
- Board meeting #115: Wednesday 26 – 27 May 2021 (off-site meeting and/or field trip)
- Board meeting #116: Wednesday 4-5 August 2021 (Cairns meeting)
- Board meeting #117: Wednesday 17-18 November 2021 (Cairns meeting)

The board will also be required for an:

- Out of Session virtual meeting: April 2021 – approval of budget and 2021-22 business plan
- Out of Session virtual/face to face meeting: World Heritage Day 2021 pre-Cassowary Awards to approve recipients

#### Action:

- Contact GBRMPA to ascertain their board meeting dates with a view for a joint meeting. If unable to align seek to invite CEO and Chair as well as Duane Fraser to attend a WTMA Board meeting.
- Advice SAC and CCC secretariates of board meeting dates to assist with their meeting planning

### 5.4. Board meeting 113 communique

#### Resolution

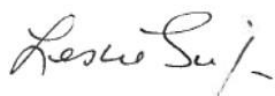
The board **approved** the communique for meeting 113.

### 5.5. Other business

Scott Buchanan advised the Board that today is the DES DG's Safety Awards. Peter Weiland has won the Safety and Wellbeing Leaders Award for establishing and maintaining best practice in the workplace. The Board congratulated and thanked Peter for the leadership and achievements he has made for the Authority to implement best practice workplace health and safety.

The Board had the privilege of participating in an acknowledgement of Max Chappell, long term employee who contributed substantially to the management of the Wet Tropics over many years. His expertise is a significant loss to the Authority, and Director's wished him well in his retirement.

Board meeting 113 closed at 3.38pm.



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Ms Leslie Shirreff PSM  
Chair

Date 24/02/2021