



BOARD COMMUNIQUE 125

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) is a statutory body overseen by an independent Board of Directors. The current Board of Directors includes Ms Chrissy Grant (Chair), Ms Robin Clark, Dr Sally Driml, Mr William Enoch-Tranby, Ms Ailsa Lively, Professor Stephen Williams, and Mr Scott Buchanan (Executive Director). The Authority's role is to ensure Australia's obligation to the World Heritage Convention is met in relation to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area).

The Authority's Board of Directors met in an online meeting on **Tuesday 7 November 2023**. In this communique, the Board reports on the following topics:

- **Dr Sally Driml's reappointment to Board**
- **Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum**
- **5-Year Business Strategy**
- **Milestone report, budget and risk assessment register**
- **Restoration Program update**
- **Policies for rescinding**

Dr Sally Driml's reappointment to the Board

The Board celebrated the reappointment of eco-tourism expert Dr Sally Driml as a director to its Board for a further three years. Dr Driml has made an exceptional contribution to the Board, providing strong leadership to the Authority's Sustainable Tourism Plan, and demonstrating a genuine commitment to engaging with and supporting the Authority's Community Consultative Committee, and her reappointment will allow her continued oversight of several crucial programs. Dr Driml is looking forward to her ongoing role in the important work of the Board to meet Australia's international obligations for the World Heritage Area under the World Heritage Convention.

Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum

The Board received a summary of the 2023 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum, which was held in October on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrganydji Country. With over 90 attendees, representatives from Rainforest Aboriginal groups and partner agencies provided information and discussed management priorities for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and broader biocultural region.

The three-day event featured inspiring presentations from various organisations on creating opportunities and change through partnerships, Path to Treaty, caring for Country, and tourism and economic development. Rainforest Aboriginal attendees passed several resolutions, including endorsing the establishment of the Indigenous Advisory Committee by the Authority and Terrain NRM, and supporting the Bama Country and Culture project to enhance awareness of Rainforest Aboriginal cultures and ongoing connections with the World Heritage Area. The Forum also resolved to provide in principle support to include Indigenous values in the World Heritage listing. The Board noted this process will be a long-term initiative.

The Forum outcomes report will be finalised and circulated soon, and attendees will be surveyed for their feedback on all aspects of the forum to continue improvement of this important event.

5-Year Business Strategy

The Board were briefed on the outcomes of a 1.5-day staff workshop held in October where all Authority staff collaborated to draft the 5-Year Business Strategy 2023-2028. A 5-year Business Strategy is a deliverable under the new Commonwealth funding agreement. The Strategy is aligned with the Strategic Plan, however the actions under each pillar have been contemporised and reflect the expected focus and activities of the Authority over the next five years. A new inclusion in the draft 5-Year Business Strategy 2023-2028 is a set of 5-year outcomes, to provide for clearer strategic planning, monitoring and reporting. The Board endorsed the 5-Year Business Strategy.

Restoration Program update

The Board was updated on the Wet Tropics Restoration Program, which includes four key deliverables:

- Establish and implement a Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance
- Deliver up to three demonstration sub-catchment restoration plans
- Quantify the climate benefits of Wet Tropics forests as carbon sinks and major carbon stores
- Expansion of new and emerging standards and approaches to account for forest restoration – supporting access and uptake of market opportunities

Highlights included the establishment of the Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance Interim Steering Group to support organisations undertaking restoration work, as well as progress on place-based planning with a focus on the Jabalbina pilot project – Wawu Dimbi. This project is building capacity for Eastern Kuku Yalanji to participate in the coordination of restoration activities in the Daintree area and working with investors. Collaboration and partnerships are the real focus of the work ahead – growing trusted relationships.

Milestone report, budget and risk assessment register

The Board noted the three-monthly review of the 2023-24 budget and Annual Business Plan milestone report. They were impressed with the significant progress undertaken in the quarter, including the establishment of the Wet Tropics Restoration Program Interim Steering Group, planning for an expert workshop to develop an approach for the Eastern Forests of Far North Queensland priority place and for the now conducted Rainforest Aboriginal People's Regional Forum. During this time work has commenced on the Eastern Kuku Yalanji return to Country project, substantial progress made on the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides, significant permitting assessment work undertaken, and input provided on the FNQ Regional Plan and other state planning documents.

The Board was pleased to note the budget is on track. The Board also undertook their annual update of the Authority's the Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite Statement.

Policies for rescinding

The Board approved the rescinding of three Wet Tropics Management Authority Board policy statements, which are now redundant and superseded by more contemporary guidance material:

- No.6 Native Title (1999)
- No.14 Involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal People in WTMA Policy, Planning, Permitting and Management (2006)
- No.16 Use of Compound Sodium Fluoroacetate (Compound 1080) in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (2004)

These policy statements were reviewed as part of a wider audit to ensure the Authority's policy documents are relevant, contemporary and provide a consistent framework for the interpretation of legislative and non-legislative matters. The rescinded policies will be archived and removed from the website.

Board meeting 126 will be early 2024.

For more information, please phone 07 4241 0500 or email wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au