



Our vision is to protect the values of the Wet Tropics through collaboration, culture, knowledge and passion.

BOARD COMMUNIQUE 126

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 20 February 2024**. In this communique, the Board reports on the following topics:

- **Impacts to the World Heritage Area from extreme rainfall event**
- **Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program update**
- **Indigenous Advisory Committee**
- **State of Wet Tropics Report 2023-24**
- **Research protocols**
- **Restoration Program update**

Impacts to the World Heritage Area from extreme rainfall event

The Board acknowledged and discussed the impact on the environment and the community due to recent cyclones and the extreme rainfall event that followed. They were briefed by Authority staff and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service on the response and recovery efforts. They were concerned by the scale and severity of known impacts, including landslips and changes to watercourses, and recognised more assessment of damage is required. The Board was pleased to hear Authority staff have been assisting infrastructure providers to restore services in line with the Wet Tropics Management Plan. The Authority will work with others to seek funding to facilitate suitable responses and nature-sensitive recovery whilst building community resilience.

Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program update

The Board received a comprehensive briefing on the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program, with news that the Authority is about to make a significant eradication announcement, and are on track to announce further eradications this year. The Board congratulated the team on their fantastic and tireless efforts over the last decade, which are now coming to fruition. This world-leading program managing invasive ants demonstrates the commitment of the Australian and Queensland governments to meeting their World Heritage obligations by funding the Authority's Eradication Program, which is showing a successful return on investment.

Indigenous Advisory Committee

The Board approved the recommendations of the selection panel to establish the Indigenous Advisory Committee. This joint committee will ensure the views, interests and aspirations of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples are included in the

delivery of strategic planning and work programs of the Authority and Terrain NRM. This collaboration between Terrain NRM and the Authority is an innovative approach recognising common interests of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples in management of the region. The membership will be announced once approved by both Boards. Expressions of interest will remain open until a minimum of two suitable female candidates are appointed.

State of Wet Tropics Report 2023-24

The Board endorsed this year's State of Wet Tropics Report to be a 'pressure-state-response' assessment – to provide a broad assessment of the integrity and condition of the Area. This report will be timely to contribute to the Queensland State of the Environment Report in early 2025 and will help to inform better management practices. This is responding to advice from our Community Consultative Committee and Scientific Advisory Committee who feel this type of analysis is overdue.

Communications strategy update

The Board was provided with an update on the development of the new communications strategy. There is currently an open request for quote process seeking to engage a communication specialist to develop the strategy. This process will be guided by a steering committee, including a Board Director, to provide feedback and mitigate risks. The communications strategy has been identified as a critical tool to help plan, coordinate and deliver agreed strategic communication activities that support the Authority's strategic plan and priority projects.

Research protocols

The Board was updated on the trial of the Application for Research Endorsement (ARE) process – a joint initiative between Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the Authority. This protocol delivers on a long-standing commitment to Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to ensure consultation happens on research projects on Country. A formal review of the trial process is being undertaken identifying improvements based on feedback from researchers, Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, staff and other experts. Once approved, this will see continued improvements to the research permitting process by QPWS informed by Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples.

Restoration Alliance update

The Board noted progress on the Wet Tropics Restoration Program, with recent highlights including:

- The annual Restoration Alliance field trip and workshop on the Cassowary Coast in December 2023 attended by over 40 partners including more than 20 Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers.
- The Restoration Alliance Interim Steering Group met four times in 2023 and focuses on improving governance and communication within the Alliance.
- The Authority has joined a regional collaboration of partners in the Wet Tropics to plan a 'side event' in Cairns for the Global Nature Positive Summit to be held in Sydney in October 2024.

The Alliance founding partners (the Authority, Terrain NRM and James Cook University) continue to meet and collaborate to support the Alliance.

Board meeting 127 will be held in Cairns in June 2024.

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