

Board Communique No 110
14-15 November 2019

The Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) held meeting No 110 in Cairns on the 14-15 November 2019. Chair, Ms Leslie Shirreffs PSM was joined by directors Mr Phil Rist, Mr John Courtenay, Ms Anne Clarke, Dr Leah Talbot and Professor Iain Gordon.

On day one of the board meeting, directors, observers, staff and partners of the Authority attended the launch of *Accept, Act, Adapt: Climate Adaptation Plan for the Wet Tropics 2020—2030* at the Cairns Botanical Gardens Visitors Centre. Chair Leslie Shirreffs launched the plan which was collaboratively developed with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, tourism interests, research entities, the conservation sector, NRM bodies and State agencies. The plan's vision is a Wet Tropics community which is recognized as a world leader in successful adaptive management of World Heritage in response to climate change. Copies of the plan will be distributed to State and Federal Ministers and other key strategic partners, and can be downloaded from wettropics.gov.au/climate-adaptation-plan-for-the-wet-tropics-20202030.

On the afternoon of day one directors travelled to Babinda to meet with Liz Owen and Dennis Ah Kee of Jaragun NRM. Jaragun NRM, winners of the 2019 Cassowary Award for Climate Change Leadership, have been leading environmental restoration in the Russell River catchment and have formed strong partnerships locally and nationally. Liz and Dennis briefed directors on their development of a draft Russell River Catchment Sustainability Plan 2020-2035. Their plan draws upon a whole of system catchment management framework and relies on the action of landowners and farmers to achieve outcomes that positively impact the catchment, including for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef. Directors then gained a first-hand understanding of the connection between Jaragun NRM's work and the World Heritage Area by visiting a constructed wetland and a bio-reactor pilot sites.

On day two of the board meeting directors had key discussions regarding the implementation of climate actions under the board's 10-point plan. The 10-point plan in tandem with *the Wet Tropics Climate Adaptation Plan*, is aimed at improving the resilience and protection of the World Heritage Area. The directors were updated on the preparation of project proposals against the climate plan, including the convening of a working group and collaborations with partners to progress actions. Directors also learned more about the development of an investment prospectus which will facilitate participation in improving the resilience and integrity of the World Heritage Area.

Board directors were briefed on the progress of the refresh of the Wet Tropics of Queensland Regional Agreement. The Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) are leading the refresh process and recently completed a work plan to finalise development of the implementation agreement. The board supported the need for better engaging government agencies in the process going forward.

Directors were updated on the progress of the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program and were pleased to learn that the NAMAC taskforce surveyed 120ha and that yellow crazy ants were only found in one place which has since been treated. A treatment by-hand will be completed in early December 2019 as there are now so few areas needing broad scale treatment that it is not feasible to use a helicopter.

Directors were excited to hear about the use of the QuestaGame app which draws on citizen science principles to identify and accurately map biodiversity and invasive species, including yellow crazy ants. QuestaGame have an aim to be the world's first billion dollar company with a core mission of saving life on earth by creating and supporting a nature based economy and building the world's largest biodiversity database. Board directors were briefed on how the Authority is utilising QuestaGame to

collect information on yellow crazy ants and other ant species across the World Heritage Area.

The board received an update on the Tour Guide program including plans for a Tour Guide Training Workshop in April 2020 at Paluma, plans to tender for technical expertise to develop the Tourism Destination Plan and the upcoming EcoTourism Australia conference planned for 2-4 December in Cairns.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) also briefed directors on the Cassowary Coast Panama Disease Tropics Race 4 Feral Pig Program, a program to eradicate feral pigs as a means to reducing the spread of the panama disease. The disease threatens to decimate the banana industry, however the eradication of feral pigs would have positive benefits for the World Heritage Area as pigs are a major vector of weeds, pathogens and parasites and reduce the resilience of the Area.

For further information about the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area or the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area please visit our [website](http://wettropics.gov.au) at wettropics.gov.au