



BOARD COMMUNIQUE 117

The Board of Directors of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) met in Cairns on 15–16 November 2021. Key items discussed included:

- **introducing the new Chair**
- **Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan implementation**
- **landscape restoration initiatives in the Wet Tropics**
- **Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program**
- **RAPTT update**
- **acknowledging outgoing Directors Iain Gordon and Phil Rist**

Introducing the new Chair

The Authority's new Chair, Ms Chrissy Grant, chaired her inaugural meeting. Ms Grant, who commenced the role of Chair on 24 September, thanked the previous Chair, Ms Leslie Shirreffs for her leadership and for supporting the transition to a new Chair. The Chair is a proud Eastern Kuku Yalanji woman with a strong connection to the Wet Tropics region.

As a result of this connection, Ms Grant declared a conflict of interest for any business that may involve Eastern Kuku Yalanji People and Country. The Board agreed that in accordance with provisions in section 20(1) and 31(1) of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*, the Chair will step out of the Chair position for any business related to Eastern Kuku Yalanji People and Country and Dr Sally Driml will act as Chairperson for deliberations and decisions, for a period of up to 3 months. This arrangement will be reviewed at the next Board meeting.

Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan implementation

The Board received an update on the implementation on the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan which was launched in September 2021. Following the launch, the Authority undertook targeted consultation with key partners identified in the Plan. In partnership with Savannah Guides, three roadshow events were delivered in Cairns, Port Douglas and Yungaburra to increase awareness of and promote the Plan. The Department of Environment and Science is leading the establishment of an interagency working group to guide the implementation of shared tourism actions across participating government agencies and industry to address emerging issues. The Board acknowledged the hard work that has already started with the commencement of priority actions under the Plan including the evolution of the Wet Tropics Tour Guide program in collaboration with partners.

Landscape restoration initiatives in the Wet Tropics

The Authority held a two-day landscape restoration symposium at Tinaroo on the Atherton Tableland on 13–14 September which coincided with the [UN Decade of Restoration](#). The symposium included a field trip to various restoration sites, a yarning circle with Traditional Custodians and a conference with 126 people (96 in person and 30 joining online). A Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance was launched at the symposium to bring together a network of community, landholders, Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, industry, individuals, government and non-government organisations to take action on the climate change crisis and to initiate strategic landscape scale restoration initiatives. The Board considered a draft Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance proposal at this meeting. The Authority's Scientific Advisory Committee and Community Consultative Committee will further consider the draft proposal during their joint workshop on Thursday 18 November 2021. The Authority is currently developing a project proposal to secure investment for Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance.

The Board noted that the 2020–2021 State of Wet Tropics Report 'Growing opportunities—landscape restoration for biodiversity and ecosystem recovery' was tabled in both the Australian and Queensland parliaments with the Authority's Annual Report 2020–2021 on 4 November 2021.

Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program

The Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program is now in its final year of current Australian and Queensland government investment and the Authority is looking for continued investment of \$6million a year for 6 years. The Authority has carried out modelling that shows that, by 2028, continued funding will achieve 88% eradication of existing known areas and the remaining 12% of the area will be in post treatment validation. The Board celebrated the success of the program, noting: the Authority has achieved eradication of yellow crazy ants from four sites; 71% of the infested area no longer requires broadscale treatment; there is strong community and industry engagement; there continues to be targeted surveillance; the Authority has assembled a very skilled, multidisciplinary team; and there are now three odour detection dogs involved.

RAPTT update

Following the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum in July 2021, the Authority is now supporting the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Think Tank (RAPTT) who will be meeting on 1–2 December 2021. At their meeting, the RAPTT will consider membership and the continuing drive to refresh the Regional Agreement.

At the Board's meeting, Director's endorsed an interim Section 62 Guideline under the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998, to replace an existing outdated Guideline. The purpose is to ensure that Authority staff, permit applicants and holders are consulting appropriately with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples with rights and interests in lands and waters in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Authority will discuss the updated version with RAPTT.

Acknowledging outgoing Directors Iain Gordon and Phil Rist

Board meeting 117 was the last meeting for Professor Iain Gordon and Mr Philip Rist who have both made incredible contributions to the Authority during their terms. The Board thanked Iain for providing significant leadership and support to the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC); being a really effective conduit with the research sector, including in publishing research papers about the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area; and for being a driving force behind our State of Wet Tropics reports. Iain reflected on the time he joined the Board after it had been inquorate, the skills each individual director brought to the Board, and the journey taken to set the strategic direction for the Authority. He acknowledged the support of the staff to deliver outcomes. Phil Rist was thanked for championing a rights-based approach to World Heritage management, providing significant leadership and support to the refresh of the Regional Agreement and the Wet Tropics Management Plan review process through the Authority's Indigenous Advisory Members (IAM) and the RAPTT. Phil also made significant contributions to the Rainforest Aboriginal News, Regional Forums and the 'Our Collective Journey' timeline story. Phil mentioned that he has been involved in the World Heritage Area for a long time and will continue to be. As a Traditional Owner from the rainforest, he has seen the Authority come a long way.

Board meeting 118 will be held in late March 2022.

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