



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

BOARD COMMUNIQUE 122

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 Ailsa Lively, Dr Sally Driml, Professor Stephen Williams, Ms Robin Clark 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 Authority's Board of Directors met in person on Friday 10 March 2023. Key items discussed included:

- **Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum outcomes**
- **Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan update**
- **Bama Country and Culture Project update**
- **Interim review of the Strategic Plan**
- **Cassowary Awards**

Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum outcomes

The Board received a summary of the 2022 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum, which was held October 2022. They were pleased to hear the forum had a more participatory format, which was well received. It allowed for more presentations from Rainforest Aboriginal groups who delivered powerful stories from the heart, including from young voices. A review is underway to seek an increase in Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' attendance, encourage more engagement from government agencies and ensure clear resolutions are made to support the Authority's business. The outcomes report will be provided for endorsement at the 2023 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum later this year.

Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan update

The Board were impressed to hear about the progress occurring under the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan, which has involved significant and innovative engagement and collaboration. The Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides program concept has been completed and development of online learning packages is underway (due to launch in July 2023). The Authority has also contributed to range of key tourism industry strategies, planning documents and products, and continues to work collaboratively with regional, state and national partners on delivery of the plan.

Bama Country and Culture Project update

The Board received an update on the Bama Country and Culture Project – formerly known as the Cultural Landscapes Hub project. This project will develop a digital educational tool to increase awareness of the National Heritage-listed Indigenous cultural values of the Wet Tropics. The tool will be created with Rainforest Aboriginal groups to tell their stories in their voice. A steering committee from across the Wet Tropics has been established to guide the project and at their first meeting in February, they endorsed a project plan, engagement plan and budget. The project is now in the consultation phase with a draft concept to be developed by the end of this financial year. This project will complement the Wet Tropics World Heritage Guides program.

Interim review of the Strategic Plan

An interim operational review of the Wet Tropics Strategic Plan 2020-2030 is underway to inform recommendations for a five-year business strategy to align with the next Commonwealth funding cycle. The Board was updated on the scope of work, findings to date and proposed next steps to maximise opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness across all areas of the Authority to deliver business outcomes. A full and comprehensive review will be conducted at the halfway mark of the plan in 2025 which will include broader consultation.

Cassowary Awards

The Board approved extending the occurrence of the Cassowary Awards to every 24 months and endorsed a review of the awards, which will include refining award categories and refreshing the event's branding. The Cassowary Awards are an important and unique opportunity to celebrate and support community contributions made towards the conservation and presentation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area - and the Authority want to ensure they continue to be valued by the community. The 20th Cassowary Awards will be held in late 2024.

Board meeting 123 will be held in Cairns in early June.

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