

Community Engagement Strategy 2011-2015

Purposeful interaction between people
in relation to the management of the
World Heritage Area



Wet Tropics of Queensland
World Heritage Area

This document should be cited as:

Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA)
(2011) *Wet Tropics World Heritage Area:
Community Engagement Strategy 2011 – 2015*.
(Ed. N.Reis) WTMA, Cairns. (18pp).

ISBN 978-1-921591-62-4

This document has been prepared with all due diligence and care, based on the best available information at the time of publication. The Wet Tropics Management Authority holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions in this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibilities of those parties. Information contained in this document is from a number of sources, and, as such does not necessarily represent government or departmental policy.

This document is copyright. The Copyright Act 1968 permits fair dealing for study, research, information or educational purposes subject to inclusion of a sufficient acknowledgement of the source.

Front cover photo: Wet Tropics Tablelands |

Credit: WTMA.

Back cover photo: Endangered southern cassowary, *Casuarius casuarius johnsonii* |

Credit: WTMA.



Australian Government



Table of contents

Abbreviations	2
Preface	3
Part 1. Background	4
The region	4
WTMA’s approach to community engagement	4
Engaging Rainforest Aboriginal People	4
Benefits of Community Engagement	5
Our established commitment to community engagement	5
WTMA’s current context	6
Part 2 Strategy	7
Objectives	7
Principles to support engagement	7
<i>Community engagement key areas</i>	8
Collaborative governance partnerships in cultural and natural resource management	9
Place and/or project specific decision making	9
Ongoing community awareness and behavioural change	9
Capacity building	9
<i>Coordination and communication – approaches and mechanisms</i>	10
Board of Directors	10
Community Consultative Committee	10
Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee	10
Scientific Advisory Committee	11
Other Committees	11
Partner agencies	12
Role of WTMA staff	12
Part 3. Implementation	13
<i>WTMA Community Engagement actions</i>	13
Evaluation and monitoring	17

ABBREVIATIONS

Act	<i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i>
Area	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area
Authority	Wet Tropics Management Authority
Board	The WTMA Board
CCC	Community Consultative Committee
CES	Community Engagement Strategy
Community	The WTWHA community includes local, national or international groups or organisations knowingly (or unknowingly) to have an affiliation with the Area
CSLG	Conservation Sector Liaison Group
DERM	Department of Environment and Resource Management
Engagement	Engagement is used as a broad, inclusive term to describe the extensive assortment of interactions between people
GBRMPA	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
IAP2	International Association of Public Participation
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
RAAC	Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee
Stakeholders	A person or organisation that belongs to the community
SAC	Scientific Advisory Committee
SEWPAC	Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHA	World Heritage Area
WTMA	Wet Tropics Management Authority
WTWHA	Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

PREFACE

The core function and focus of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) is derived from The *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention*¹. Article 5 of the Convention asks authorities to act and to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage. Article 5 of the Convention also aims to give the World Heritage Area '**...a function in the life of the community**'.

The WTMA Community Engagement Strategy (CES) establishes our guiding principles based on this objective to give the World Heritage Area a role in the life of the community. It forms part of a comprehensive framework that assists the Authority to work with the community to achieve agreed goals for the best possible management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (the 'Area'). The CES will be used to guide the development of more detailed community engagement plans and activities.

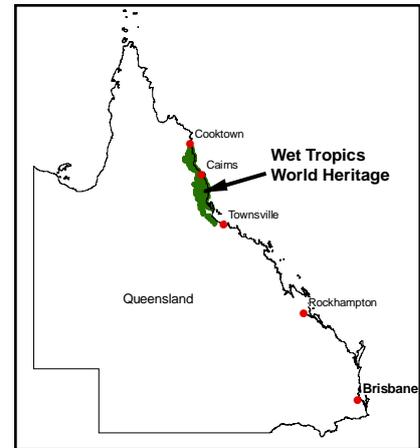
¹ UNESCO World Heritage Convention <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>

PART 1: BACKGROUND

The region

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area extends 400 km along the tropical coast of north-east Australia in the State of Queensland between Cooktown to the north and Townsville to its south.

The Area is a global biodiversity hotspot and this is reflected in its inscription under the UNESCO *World Heritage Convention* for its outstanding universal natural values and integrity. In addition to these natural values, the region is also culturally rich, comprising the traditional lands of 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribes.



The region has capable management institutions, including the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA), the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) and the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPAC).

WTMA's approach to community engagement

'Engagement' means purposeful interaction between people in relation to the management of the Area. It can include one-way information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action. All these approaches establish and maintain relationships between WTMA and the Area's communities.

In carrying out its work, WTMA recognises:

- **communities of place** – the people that live in and around the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area – and in particular the traditional owners of the Area
- **communities of interest** – WTMA is very conscious that people living throughout Australia and the World have an interest in the protection and management of the Area.

WTMA's particular approach to 'community engagement' is a planned and structured process with the specific purpose of working with identified agencies, partners, and community groups to promote cooperative management and decision-making for the Area and its communities.

Engaging Rainforest Aboriginal people

WTMA recognises that Rainforest Aboriginal people have special relationships and aspirations in respect to Traditional Owner responsibilities for custodianship of country within the Area. In the spirit of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*² and the *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage*

² Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 61/295 on 13 September 2007 see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html>

Area Regional Agreement (2005)³, WTMA follows policy and procedures that support self determination and the participation of Rainforest Aboriginal people in the decision making and management of the Area. This involves respecting Traditional Owner rights, and takes a variety of forms including place and/or project specific involvement, and local and community engagement including through Traditional Owner representative bodies.

Benefits of community engagement

Community engagement promotes and supports:

- a more active, informed and involved community
- greater accountability on the part of management agencies
- community direction and input into decision making relating to the Area
- increased support and confidence in management decision making.

Community engagement can lead to the identification of mechanisms for building the community's capacity to join with WTMA and other stakeholders in dealing with complex matters and issues. Through this strategy WTMA aims for:

- outstanding community engagement leadership in natural resource management
- community participation in management of the Area
- community input into the Area's policy and decision making
- early and effective responses to emerging community issues and interests
- systematic and well-planned engagement processes.

Our established commitment to community engagement

Community engagement has been a core feature of WTMA's operations since its inception. The Authority has a history of dealing with and resolving contentious issues and competing interests relating to land use in the Area. WTMA has developed a comprehensive array of community consultative mechanisms, which has helped negotiate the way to a strong consensus and cross-sector support for the Area. These established mechanisms and approaches have served the World Heritage Area well.

Some of the achievements that have been supported by these arrangements are:

- *the Wet Tropics Plan: Your First Invitation to Comment*⁴
- the 1993 *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act* which affirmed the Authority's functions and reinforced the commitment for consultation and community engagement
- the Authority's key 1997 policy document *Protection Through Partnerships*⁵.

After the completion of the *Wet Tropics Management Plan* in 1998, the Authority undertook a range of strategic planning exercises to assist in management of the Area. Rainforest Aboriginal people were particularly involved in the preparation and development of the 1998 report for the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council entitled '*Which*

³ Wet Tropics Management Authority (2005) Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement
http://www.wettropics.gov.au/rah/rah_pdf/regional_agreement.pdf

⁴ http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_pdf/history/chronology.pdf

⁵ http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_pdf/Strategies/ProtectionThroughPartnerships.pdf

*Way Our Cultural Survival? The Review of Aboriginal Involvement in the Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area*⁶; as well as *The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement* which was signed off in 2005 by 18 tribal groups and government land management parties.

Examples of management documents that were developed in association with key stakeholders are the *Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy*⁷ and the *Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy*⁸. Each of these strategies involved extensive engagement of communities and stakeholders. In both cases WTMA's objective was to ensure the strategies incorporated the knowledge of the community, were aligned to community needs and aspirations and mobilised community and stakeholder support for implementation.

WTMA's current context

WTMA's success in developing engagement mechanisms that suit the requirements of the day has been a strength of the past. This should continue to be the case today as the Authority moves to embrace new challenges and a new context for operating.

In comparison to the period soon after listing of the World Heritage Area and establishment of the Authority, we now enjoy greater community support for the Area and more cooperative and partnership-based approaches to its management.

There has been changes in the number of agencies and organisations with recognised management roles in and around the Area. For example, we have seen the emergence of *Terrain NRM*, Traditional Owners and other Indigenous organisations, as well as organised conservation groups. On the other hand, the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) represents a consolidation of previously separate State government land and resource management agencies.

WTMA's focus is increasingly targeted on working with other government agencies, non-government organisations, and community sectors which have become more management focused in the last two decades. This involves facilitation, brokering partnerships, creating linkages, supporting knowledge transfer and working with others to solve problems.

During 2009, feedback from staff and key stakeholders indicated a need to strengthen WTMA's role in promoting collaborative networks in resource management. Community concerns about on-ground management and consultation were highlighted in a *Living with World Heritage Community Survey*⁹. This concluded that, '*The majority of residents felt consultation and communication between management agencies and the community could be improved*'. A perception reported in the survey is that decision making roles are not shared among government and community groups. This can be interpreted as an opportunity for WTMA to play a further role in ensuring that the various groups could be supported to come together in networked or collaborative governance.

⁶ Wet Tropics Management Authority (1998) '*Which Way our Cultural Survival*' http://www.wettropics.gov.au/rah/rah_pdf/REVIEW.pdf

⁷ Wet Tropics Management Authority (2000) *Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy* http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_pdf/Strategies/naturebased_tourism.pdf

⁸ Wet Tropics Management Authority (2004) *Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy* http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_pdf/Strategies/wtmaConservationStrategy.pdf

⁹ Wet Tropics Management Authority (2003) *Living With World Heritage* http://www.wettropics.gov.au/media/media_pdf/community_publications/community_survey.pdf

PART 2: STRATEGY

Objectives

The objectives of this Community Engagement Strategy are drawn from the community partnerships goal of the *Wet Tropics Management Authority Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013*¹⁰, and incorporated into this Community Engagement Strategy as ‘Primary’ and ‘Supporting’ objectives. Primary objectives are:

1. Communities are well informed of Wet Tropics values, ecosystems services, threats and management
2. Wet Tropics themes are widely studied in primary and secondary schools and universities as a basis for increased environmental knowledge, education and awareness
3. The Wet Tropics community is engaged in the management of the World Heritage Area.

Supporting objectives are:

4. Implementation of natural resource management policy in the Wet Tropics Region is coordinated among government and community organisations
5. The tourism industry projects and appropriately presents the values of the World Heritage Area
6. Knowledge about the Wet Tropics continues to be generated and shared.

Principles to support engagement

WTMA’s guiding principles for community engagement are:

1. Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is highly dependent on community support for the Area itself and for its managers and management programs
2. All communities should have access to information about the values, uses and management of the World Heritage Area
3. People and communities affected by management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area have a right to a say in the development of management decisions
4. Decision makers should be accessible and there should be transparent processes for contributing to management decisions as a means of maintaining community confidence in the management of the World Heritage Area and the performance of management agencies
5. Successful management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area depends on collaborative relationships between a broad cross section of community members, groups and land management agencies
6. WTMA’s own success depends on partnerships with others involved in protecting, managing and presenting the World Heritage Area
7. WTMA must be inclusive and connect with all sections of the population, having particular regard to the views and interests of Rainforest Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners
8. WTMA respects that there are a range of community groups and agencies with direct interest in the management of the Area and seeks to equitably involve and respond to their concerns and interests.

¹⁰ Wet Tropics Management Authority (2008) Strategic Plan 2008-2013 http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwaha/mwaha_wtmaplan.html

Community engagement key areas

WTMA community engagement practice will focus on four key areas, as indicated in Diagram 1.

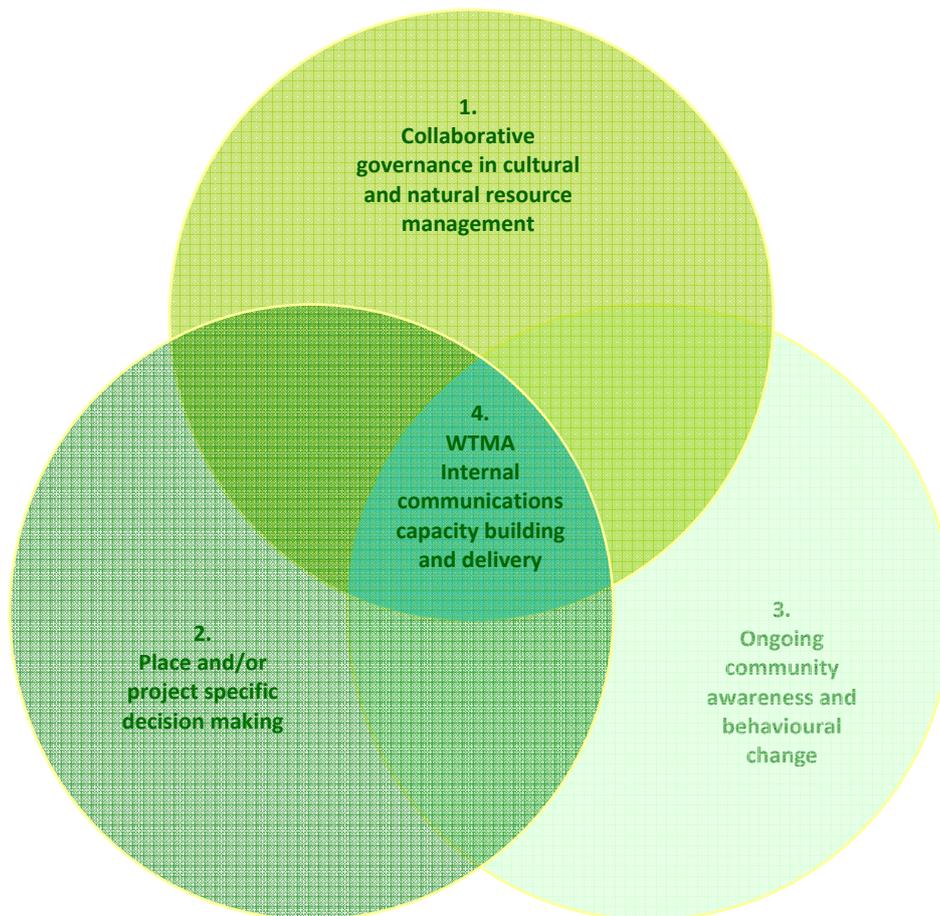


Diagram 1: WTMA Community Engagement Key Areas

Collaborative governance partnerships in cultural and natural resource management

Many individuals and organisations in government, academia, business and in the community sector contribute towards the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. WTMA has an established role of coordinating their work for the benefit of the World Heritage Area and its associated communities. WTMA will seek to facilitate collaboration and partnerships between different organisations that typically have similar skilled professionals often working within the same field. WTMA facilitates collaborations of these networks to recognise overlaps of responsibilities, share tasks, and effectively rationalise resources to better preserve and present the Area.

Example: WTMA's Research Strategy involves partnering with Federal and State Government and the scientific community to collaborate tropical rainforest research approaches to the Area and assisting management of similar areas around the world.

Place and/or project specific decision making

WTMA frequently undertakes place and/or project specific work affecting communities in various ways. WTMA will ensure these projects include appropriate (to the nature and scale of the work) community engagement plans, and assist or collaborate with other organisations to do this work, as a means to facilitate decision making. WTMA will seek to use the best tools to effectively engage the community consistent with the methodologies developed by the International Association for Public Participation. WTMA will also capitalise on opportunities to innovate and experiment as a basis for improvement and learning.

Example: WTMA is involved in developing community development plans to better empower Eastern Kuku Yalanji to manage their country within the Area. Learnings from this project will have relevance for engaging with all Traditional Owner groups across the Area.

Ongoing community awareness and behavioural change

WTMA has an active publications program aimed at informing the community about the attributes, values and management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This has been an important part of building stakeholders' awareness and support for the Area. This awareness building needs to target all of the community in a balanced approach for all ages. WTMA will continue to promote the Area through WTMA events, media promotions, using contemporary technology, with consistent branding and key messaging.

Example: WTMA produces and distributes material that provides local and international users with opportunity to learn and appreciate the World Heritage Area's universal value.

Capacity building

All WTMA staff and many in other management agencies are active in community engagement in various ways. WTMA staff and people in other management agencies need knowledge and skills to support their work in planning and delivery of community engagement processes. Future priorities for capacity development include developing skills in community engagement planning, facilitation techniques, presentation and other communication methods and customer service.

Example: WTMA's Community Engagement Team advises and supports other staff with community engagement Planning and implementation across all projects within the Authority.

Coordination and communication – approaches and mechanisms

Board of Directors

Although primarily having a strategic governance role, it is important to stress that the WTMA Board also has important relationships with the Wet Tropics community. The Board has a critical role in ensuring the Authority implements best practices in community engagement. Drawn mostly from the regional community, with strong regional networks, Directors are vitally concerned to advance the World Heritage Convention goal of giving the World Heritage Area a role in the life of the community. At all stages, Directors seek to ensure communities have access to the Area, knowledge about its values and management, have access to decision makers and can influence policy and planning decisions. The Board is also committed to ensuring WTMA itself is aware of community issues and is oriented towards the community in all its activities. WTMA's supportive and adaptive relationship with community organisations is recognised as one of the most important ways it can create value for Wet Tropics communities.

Community engagement priorities for the Board are development of more systematic methods of collecting and considering community intelligence, greater emphasis on feedback from Board meetings and more structured Director engagement with community and partner organisations.

Community Consultative Committee

The Community Consultative Committee (CCC) will continue to be a core component of the system of community engagement for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Act), the Community Consultative Committee has the roles of advising the WTMA Board about community views and assisting in dissemination of information to the community. CCC members are expected to advance the views of the community they represent, rather than their own personal views.

To enable the CCC to effectively implement responsibilities established in the Act, the CCC works with WTMA staff to advise on, plan and implement contemporary community engagement practices. The CCC plays an important role in representing the community and being a communications conduit in future WTMA community engagement planning and project delivery.

Opportunities for CCC contributions to community engagement in the Wet Tropics includes fostering increased monitoring and quality assurance of community engagement processes within the World Heritage Area. This includes more structured and systematic approaches in gathering and reporting information on community issues to the Board and the facilitation of collaborative partnerships among Wet Tropic's communities, interest groups and management agencies.

Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee

The Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAAC) has analogous roles to the CCC but focuses on the special challenges of engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal Communities. RAAC assists the Board by

ensuring Aboriginal perspectives are explicitly considered in decision making. It assists WTMA staff in ensuring engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal communities is culturally appropriate and comprehensive. In turn, WTMA's support of RAAC makes a contribution to capacity development in Rainforest Aboriginal communities.

Opportunities for RAAC contribution to community engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal people include fostering increased monitoring and quality assurance of community engagement processes in WTMA and other World Heritage management agencies. This includes more structured and systematic approaches in gathering and reporting information on community issues to the Board and contributions towards capacity development in Rainforest Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Scientific Advisory Committee

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) is established under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Conservation and Management Act 1993* and has the role of advising the Board on scientific research and developments relevant to conservation and management of the Area. SAC plays a vital role in engagement with the research and education community and also underpins the scientific validity of WTMA decision making. As WTMA seeks to expand its influence in research through the recently completed research strategy, which promotes the Area as a *learning landscape*, SAC will assist in broadening and strengthening WTMA's engagement.

Opportunities for the SAC are to support WTMA in the implementation of the learning landscape concept, to contribute to new research communications activities and to operate as the core of a newly established Wet Tropics Research Associates program.

Other Committees

The Board has established a Conservation Sector Liaison Group and a Tourism Industry Liaison Group. These groups provide an important forum for liaison between WTMA and key sectoral partners. In addition to liaison on current issues, they will have continuing roles in coordinating and monitoring implementation of the *Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy* and *Wet Tropics Nature Based Tourism Strategy*, respectively.

From time to time, the Board may establish other *ad hoc* committees to ensure appropriate engagement in relation to specific issues. The CCC, RAAC and SAC may also choose to delegate consideration of certain issues to a sub-committee. However, in all cases, such committees will have a specific purpose and be time bound.

In some circumstances, in collaboration with partner agencies and stakeholder communities, WTMA may contribute staff and resources to support community forums that are not committees of the Authority, for example, the Cassowary Recovery Team.

Opportunities for other committee contributions to community engagement include strengthening two way communications with WTMA and other World Heritage management agencies and pursuing a more project focussed agenda.

Partner agencies

Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area depends on the partnership contribution of numerous other government agencies and community organisations. Prominent among these are the, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and other divisions of the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM); the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA); the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability Environment Water Population and Communities (SEWPAC); the Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP); the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) and other infrastructure agencies. Terrain Natural Resource Management is a key partner in relation to sustainable land management, research, biodiversity conservation and Indigenous community partnerships. Local Government, as a key provider of infrastructure, in planning and through local community leadership is a very important partner in the management of the World Heritage Area. Local Governments within the Area are Cooktown, Wujal Wujal, Cairns, Tablelands, Yarrabah, Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook, Townsville and Charters Towers.

While this strategy does not bind the activities of these agencies in relation to their roles in the World Heritage Area, WTMA will seek to:

- encourage high standards of community engagement consistent with the objectives and principles of this strategy and monitor progress and performance
- cooperate and support agencies in the implementation of community engagement activities
- assist agencies in capacity development programs such as staff training
- collaborate and coordinate in engagement processes relevant to the World Heritage Area.

Role of WTMA staff

All WTMA staff have a role in ensuring successful community engagement through design and delivery of projects; their responsiveness to emerging issues; through managing positive relationships with communities, clients and stakeholders; and through ensuring good communication. Staff behaviour aligned with core WTMA values such as 'open', 'inclusive', 'respectful', 'responsive' and 'supportive' contribute to community engagement success.

An important role of the WTMA Communities and Partnerships program is to provide support in identifying, planning, and implementing community engagement. WTMA will develop processes and resources to support staff in planning and implementing community engagement activities. Through this, WTMA will seek to maintain high standards, ensure efficient processes and to monitor and evaluate outcomes.

Priorities for WTMA staff in relation to community engagement include improved community engagement planning in support of decision making and project implementation, skills development and an increased emphasis on internal communication to ensure consistency and knowledge sharing.

PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION

This Community Engagement Strategy aims primarily to establish the basis for community engagement, establish objectives and principles and clarify the major mechanisms and processes WTMA will use in collaboration with its partners. It also establishes major directions for WTMA in its community engagement work.

The following table identifies some of the important implementation actions that will be needed to bring the strategy to life. It is not intended to be exhaustive and will be implemented as resources permit.

WTMA Community Engagement Actions

Community Engagement Key Area	Objective ¹¹	Strategy ¹²	Activities and projects
<p>1.</p> <p>Collaborative governance partnerships in cultural and natural resource management</p>	Implementation of natural resource management policy in the Wet Tropics region is coordinated among government and community organisations	Build and promote partnerships with other organisations including, in particular, the SEWPAC, Terrain NRM, GBRMPA, DERM, RRRRC and local governments to strengthen management programs for WH and to gain resource use efficiencies	<p>Work in partnership with QPWS and other World Heritage management agencies to ensure effective community engagement in relation to park and protected area management in the WTWHA.</p> <p>Collaborate with community engagement practitioners in other agencies to promote and develop professional skills in community engagement.</p>
<p>2.</p> <p>Place and/or project specific decision making</p>	The tourism industry protects and appropriately presents the values of the World Heritage Area	Work in partnership with the regional tourism industry to contribute to marketing, industry development and promotion of sustainable tourism practices	<p>Develop tour operator guidelines and accreditation scheme to promote high standards of presentation and environmental sustainability in the Wet Tropics tourism industry.</p> <p>Support the development of Indigenous tourism through facilitation</p>

¹¹ As identified in the Tropics Management Authority Strategic Plan 2008-2013 http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_wtmaplan.html

¹² As identified in the Tropics Management Authority Strategic Plan 2008-2013 http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_wtmaplan.html

Community Engagement Key Area	Objective ¹¹	Strategy ¹²	Activities and projects
			<p>of Indigenous tourism organisations, capability development and policy advocacy.</p> <p>Develop a World Heritage gateway centre as a major focus for presentation of the values of the WTWHA and other Australian World Heritage Areas.</p>
	<p>Knowledge about the Wet Tropics continues to be generated and communicated</p>	<p>Collaborate with research providers to guide and focus research programs and communicate outcomes</p>	<p>Promote knowledge about the Wet Tropics through seminars and conferences and workshops that promote transfer of knowledge between researchers, managers and the wider community.</p> <p>Implement the Wet Tropics Research Strategy, promoting the Area as a learning landscape.</p>
<p>3 Ongoing community awareness and behavioural change</p>	<p>The Wet Tropics community is engaged in the management of the World Heritage Area</p>	<p>Implement projects that support the involvement of communities in management of the World Heritage Area, ensure communities have opportunities to influence planning and decision making and grow the capacity of WTMA and partner agencies in community engagement practice</p>	<p>Build community engagement skills and capacity of WTMA staff and people of other World Heritage Management agencies through training, seminars and other professional development.</p> <p>Systematically identify and map community groups/members with interests in the World Heritage Area as a basis for planning and communication.</p> <p>Celebrate and support community efforts with the WTWHA through major events and awards (e.g. 'The Cassowary Awards', NAIDOC, and potentially a 'Festival of the Rainforest').</p> <p>Pursue opportunities to link and support volunteer and community groups engaged in World Heritage programs.</p>

Community Engagement Key Area	Objective ¹¹	Strategy ¹²	Activities and projects
			<p>Implement a community outreach program where WTMA and other agency managers travel to meet communities on site to advise of management activities and hear of community issues and priorities.</p> <p>Establish a WHA ambassadors program that encourages voluntary community efforts in promoting, interpreting and supporting the Area.</p>
	<p>Communities are well informed of Wet Tropic values, ecosystem services, threats and management</p>	<p>Communicate information to identified audiences about the values and management of the WHA using a wide variety of media appropriate to the audience and messages</p>	<p>Actively engage with news media to communicate values, issues, opportunities and successes as a means of enhancing community awareness and understanding of the WTWHA.</p> <p>Maintain and develop the e-newsletter as a key means of on-line communication with communities and stakeholders.</p> <p>Investigate and as feasible implement on-line technologies that promote communication between communities and WTMA and between Wet Tropics communities.</p> <p>Develop and promote more consistent presentation and branding of WTMA publications.</p> <p>Rationalise the number and scope of WTMA publications to ensure efficient and effective use of publication resources.</p> <p>Explore industry partnerships as a means of supporting publications for visitors.</p>

Community Engagement Key Area	Objective ¹¹	Strategy ¹²	Activities and projects
	<p>Wet Tropics themes are widely studied in primary and secondary schools and universities as a basis for increased environmental knowledge, education and awareness</p>	<p>Support the study of Wet Tropics themes through the provision of educational resources, advice and encouragement in coordination with schools, universities and other partnerships</p>	<p>Establish a World Heritage events calendar for community groups and WTMA.</p> <p>Support and utilise Visitor and Environmental Education Centres for greater community education and collaboration.</p> <p>Promote the previously published Rainforest Explorer as the key WTMA contribution to school curriculum resources.</p> <p>Support tertiary studies in relation to the WHA with bursaries or work integrated learning placements.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with education and training institutions in development and delivery of short courses that contribute to knowledge and understanding of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.</p>
<p>4. WTMA internal communications capacity building and delivery</p>			<p>Ensure an appropriate engagement plan that conforms to this strategy is developed in support of all WTMA activities and decisions.</p>

Evaluation and monitoring

WTMA seeks to incorporate best practice monitoring to ensure that we are achieving our goals. Identifying our practices and improving our processes, using systems such as the Monitoring Evaluating Reporting and Improving (MERI) based framework, are essential to gauge WTMA's community engagement success.

Evaluating and monitoring of community engagement are an essential part of the progression of understanding how we can better engage with the community to have successful outcomes. Community engagement can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative evaluation and monitoring can include community feedback, community surveys, governmental reviews, self assessment, interviews and reviews of the functionality of working groups/committees, just to name a few. Quantitative evaluation and monitoring can involve collecting data such as the number of website hits, the amount of information material distributed and visitor information centre audits. Quantitative data can be compiled with community engagement software packages and used to provide effective reporting on WTMA's community engagement activities.

WTMA will develop effective recording and reporting evaluation processes to monitor the progress of community engagement using a comprehensive quantitative database system.

One issue is monitoring success in the implementation of this strategy. The key performance indicators for this strategy are mapped to its objectives, but consideration must also be given to adherence to the principles it establishes. The table below establishes guiding indicators on how this strategy will be evaluated.

Wet Tropics Community Engagement Strategy –performance indicators

Objective ¹³	Performance indicators
Communities are well informed of Wet Tropics values, ecosystems services, threats and management	<p>Objective data from systematic survey indicate positive trends in community knowledge about the World Heritage Area</p> <p>Anecdotal data/media monitoring gathered from media reports, advisory committees and other sources indicate that communities are well informed about the World Heritage Area</p> <p>Number of and trend of subscribers to e-news</p> <p>Number of Wet Tropics based community events organised by WTMA and partners</p> <p>Number of visits to the WTMA web site</p>
Wet Tropics themes are widely studied in primary and secondary schools and universities as a basis for increased environmental knowledge, education and awareness	<p>Proportion of and trends in schools utilising WTMA resources in teaching programs</p> <p>Qualitative feedback from teachers</p> <p>Number of internships and related Wet Tropics projects undertaken by university students</p>
The Wet Tropics community is engaged in the management of the World Heritage Area	<p>Facilitation of collaborative government partnerships</p> <p>Facilitation of place and/or project specific community engagement activities</p> <p>Increase in community engagement skills of all WTMA staff</p> <p>Number of in the field community outreach activities organised</p> <p>Qualitative feedback from community leaders</p>
The tourism industry protects and appropriately presents the values of the World Heritage Area	<p>Increase in tourism operators engaging with WTMA</p> <p>Increase of sustainable tourism in the World Heritage Area</p>
Knowledge about the Wet Tropics continues to be generated and communicated	<p>Increase in knowledge sharing events between WTMA and the community</p> <p>Improved community knowledge about the Area</p>
Implementation of natural resource management policy in the Wet Tropics region is coordinated among government and community organisations	<p>Greater facilitation of collaborative governance networks on common natural resource management interests</p> <p>Greater collaboration with other World Heritage Areas and UNESCO</p>

¹³ As identified in the Tropics Management Authority Strategic Plan 2008-2013 http://www.wettropics.gov.au/mwha/mwha_wtmaplan.html



Endangered southern cassowary
(*Casuarius casuarius johnsonii*)

Wet Tropics Management Authority
Level 1 Cairns Corporate Tower 15 Lake Street Cairns QLD 4870
PO Box 2050 Cairns QLD 4870
Ph 4052 0555 Fax 4031 1364
visit us at www.wettropics.gov.au