



**Communiqué
Board Meeting No 103
8 & 9 March 2018**

The Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority had its second meeting for 2018 in Cairns on Thursday 8 March and Friday 9 March. The meeting coincided with the annual Cassowary Awards held on 10 March at Tjapukai.

A key focus of the meeting was the ongoing review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan. The Board considered detailed zoning proposals and other amendments to the Plan arising from the phase one consultation and endorsed the next steps in preparing the phase two consultation draft. Engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal peoples, State and Commonwealth government agencies and other organisations will continue during development of the draft plan.

The Chair of the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) reported on the recent meeting, which focused on developing an events calendar for the upcoming 30th anniversary of the World Heritage listing. A range of ideas and opportunities were then discussed and endorsed by the Board. A final program for the 30 anniversary year will now be developed for discussion with potential partners. The Chair commented on the significant value of the CCC's contribution to the Board, and how worthwhile the workshop was in engaging advice from people who know and appreciate the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area so well.

An update report was presented on the review and proposed process to prepare an addendum to the 2005 Regional Agreement (that provides for the cooperative management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area by Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and the Australian and Queensland governments). The Board emphasised that the review was a key priority to progress in collaboration with other government agencies and the recently established Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The Authority will now seek advice from the TOLG to develop a framework for this work and collaborate with the North Queensland Land Council to plan the first TOLG meeting in late March.

A highlight of the meeting was a luncheon with staff held on the veranda of the Port Authority office. Wet Tropics Management Authority staff presented the outcomes of a recent planning workshop aimed at team building and collaborative decision-making. The Board was encouraged by the commitment and enthusiasm of the team in delivering the priorities of the Authority for the World Heritage Area.

An update was also provided on the implementation of the Wet Tropics Presentation Strategy, and in particular collaboration with the tourism industry on a whole of region approach to brand development for the Wet Tropics rainforests. The Board appreciated the progress made with the tour guide training program, with the first on-country Aboriginal field school being run in partnership with Mandingalbay Yidinji (MY) people and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service this month.

Directors were updated on successes of the Yellow Crazy Ant (YCA) Eradication Program. It was encouraging to learn that an additional site in Mulgrave is now officially eradicated, bringing the number of ant-free sites to two, with another site on track for eradication in 2018. However increased vigilance has resulted in the discovery of another two areas of infestation, which was not unexpected given the increased surveillance.

Steven Brewer, Field Coordinator for the YCA program gave a presentation on the recent activities of the operations field teams and an overview of how YCA teams undertake surveys and treatment in the field, improving awareness of the on-ground activities. The Board was pleased that recent survey efforts had shown a dramatic reduction in the areas occupied by the ants, and in particular inside the World Heritage Area.

The presentations were followed by a site visit to the YCA base in Edmonton to view operations first hand. Board members were joined by the Honourable Curtis Pitt, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and Member for Mulgrave who enjoyed a tour of the operations base with YCA monitoring team members. The Board expressed its appreciation for the ongoing support from both the State and Australian governments in supporting the important work to eradicate YCA, and congratulated the YCA team on the exceptional work and results to date.

On the Saturday night, the Board celebrated the Cassowary Awards with over 200 guests. The gala awards night recognizes and honours individuals and organisations that contribute to the protection and presentation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The next Board meeting, 104 will be held on 21-22 June 2018.