

RAINFOREST ABORIGINAL news

Issue fourteen : January 2021



World Heritage update

Welcome all to the first edition of the Rainforest Aboriginal News for 2021. Well done to everyone for their achievements throughout a rough 2020 and congratulations to all Bama that had to adapt and get innovative in the workspace to continue our commitment to care for and look after Country.

In late 2020, the Wet Tropics Management Authority held its first face-to-face board meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions began. On November 26 and 27 we welcomed two new directors to the board, Dr Sally Driml and Ms Chrissy Grant. Chrissy is an Eastern Kuku Yalanji woman who has national and international experience working in issues of World Heritage, Indigenous Peoples, natural and cultural management, and biological diversity. Chrissy is also the current Chairperson and Foundation Member of the UNESCO's International Indigenous Forum on World Heritage and has been a member of the RAPSCCT for 2 years.



The Board was given a summary on each of the five strategies identified in the Wet Tropics Strategic Plan 2020-2030, and it was clear how much the staff worked tirelessly through the COVID-19 pandemic. It was great to hear that the \$2.6M Queensland Government Reef Assist funding, auspiced by the Authority, will be directed to programs led by several Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' organisations. These projects draw directly from the recently launched Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package.

In September and November, the Authority held two very successful Science and Smashed Avocado events, showcasing Rainforest Aboriginal cultural burning practices and climate science. The events were the first community in-person events held by the Authority since March. These were also successfully live-streamed through Facebook.

In what was a very disruptive 2020, we look forward to seeing you all in 2021!

Phil Rist
Director, Wet Tropics Management
Authority Board

NRM update

Firstly, a big shout out and congratulations to the Girringun Rangers for their work and for the recent SBS TV National News story capturing cool burns undertaken by an all-women fire crew.

The burns were part of Terrain NRM's Woodlands project which is improving habitat for mahogany gliders and other threatened species in the Ingham-Cardwell-Murray area. Terrain has been working with the Girringun Rangers for four years on cool burns in this region. SBS News captured one of two all-women burns there – together they were a 'first' for that area. It's great to see so many women becoming rangers and caring for Country in this way.

Secondly, the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Strategic Custodial Think Tank (RAPSCCT) (formerly TOLG) has been active in engaging both Queensland and Australian Government representatives to gather support for work around refreshing the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement. Recently this has included deputations to the Queensland Government leading into the election and a follow-up with Australian Government to secure high level support for the process.

Barry Hunter
Director, Terrain NRM
Board



Name Change

The Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) have changed their name to the 'Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Strategic Custodial Think Tank' (or RAPSCCT) to better reflect the functions of the group, however membership remains the same. This change will require formal endorsement at the next Regional Forum.



Naidoc Day



We acknowledge Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples as the traditional custodians of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and recognise their connection to this cultural landscape. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



RAPCSTT Update

Meeting with Minister Crawford

As part of the resolution by Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to refresh the Regional Agreement, the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Strategic Custodial Think Tank (formerly TOLG) has been meeting with various State and Commonwealth government ministers.

The RAPCSTT will be continuing the work of the TOLG through securing commitment through a Supplementary Agreement which sets out funding requirements to refresh the Regional Agreement over the next two years.

On the 23 September 2019 a delegation of the leadership group (Leah Talbot, Barry Hunter and Joann Schmider) met with the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Partnerships, Craig Crawford at the Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre to provide an overview of the three key items they wished to discuss that included the Regional Agreement, the refresh process and the final Regional Agreement refresh.

The leadership group set the scene with a snapshot of the long journey Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples have embarked on with the World Heritage Listing of our rainforest country, our development of 'Which Way Our Cultural Survival' and the historical significance of the Regional Agreement 2005.

Including the 35 signatories to the original agreement that represented 18 tribal groups which was one of the most significant achievements at that time for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples. Since then, there have been

two reviews of the Regional Agreement with government.

One of the most important resolutions in 2017 at the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples (RAP) Forum was the unanimous endorsement to refresh the 2005 Agreement. The 2018 and 2019 regional forums reinforced this endorsement and entrenched the authority of the leadership group to complete the Supplementary Agreement work and the refresh of the Regional Agreement.

In early 2020, members of the leadership group were able to visit a few communities to inform them of what was to go into the Supplementary Agreement. Unfortunately, COVID-19 hit and by March it was not safe to go into communities and consult with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples on these issues. Information that had been gathered from the RAP Forums and workshops were able to be considered in the re-worked Supplementary Agreement.

The COVID-19 pandemic also restricted the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Forum from taking place last May as scheduled, but it is with hope and enthusiasm that the annual RAP Forum will be re-scheduled for mid-2021.

One of the primary tasks of the leadership group delegation was to engage with Minister Crawford on funding of the Supplementary Agreement and associated work program to deliver the refresh of the Regional Agreement. With current 2020 funding having finished in June this year, our dialogue focused on

our funding ask for 2021-2022 and the work ahead to deliver the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples refresh approach.

Funding is being sought from both our State and Commonwealth government partners, and we asked Minister Crawford to champion the refresh of the Regional Agreement within the State Government to keep this moving and help us in resourcing the work to be done.

It was wonderful to see Minister Crawford agree to be a champion for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and the work in front of them, and their charter to refresh the Regional Agreement and their ongoing involvement in management of their Rainforest Country and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

RAPCSTT will continue to engage with the relevant Ministers at State and Commonwealth Government levels in early 2021.

John Locke – RAPCSTT member

The RAPCSTT will be continuing the work of the TOLG through securing commitment through a Supplementary Agreement which sets out funding requirements to refresh the Regional Agreement over the next two years.

Wanyurr-Majay celebrate NAIDOC day with local school

Wanyurr-Majay Aboriginal Corporation and Elders celebrated NAIDOC week commencing with a Sunday Church Service. The Corporation was invited by McDonnell Creek State School to celebrate NAIDOC on Tuesday 10 November, so back to school we went. McDonnell Creek State School, established in 1913, is a small school and currently has 12 students and three teachers.

The day started with a 'Welcome to Country' by Jamie Satani then the opening of their newly built yarning circle. The Elders spoke about the importance of the yarning circle, music and NAIDOC week. Elders told stories including how they got to school as there were no motor vehicles back then, they reminisced about their time at school, the biggest changes and the memories they shared there.

Elder Clive Murray shared traditional language names for body parts e.g. hands, feet, ears, eyes, etc. putting it all together with a song and dance. NAIDOC bags and specially made NAIDOC week shirts designed by local Indigenous Elder and artist Ian Jensen were handed out to students and teachers.



This was followed by morning tea and tree planting with Mulgrave Landcare. Twenty-five bush tucker trees were planted in total. The day ended with a BBQ sausage sizzle and yarning. Our NAIDOC week events would not have been made possible without funding support provided by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).



Cultural burning practices incorporated into National Accredited Fire Land Management training

Directors from Gambir Yidinji are assisting Friendly Fire Ecological Consultant Michael Blackman, in the national accreditation of government and non-government rangers in Fire Land Management, incorporating Traditional fire practices, from the tablelands to the cape.

While training and nationally accrediting new fire crew members and fire crew leaders is vital, the addition of cultural burning practices is a step ahead for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples in undertaking and ensuring custodial responsibilities are carried out in looking after Country.

Make sure to check out Gambir Yidinji on Twitter and Google to catch up on their work in building Indigenous capacity in fire land management to ensure cultural heritage continuance.

Through traditional burning we heal the Country but also protect and preserve our cultural continuance and heritage.



New Act recognises and protects Traditional knowledge

Changes made to Queensland's Biodiscovery Act 2004 (the Act) provide greater protection for the sharing of Traditional knowledge. Over the last few years, the Queensland Government has been reviewing the legislation that regulates the use of native plants for medicinal and other commercial purposes. That review is complete and new changes to the Act recognise and protect Traditional knowledge used for biodiscovery and require benefit sharing agreements with the holders of Traditional knowledge.

The new laws:

- protect Traditional knowledge used for biodiscovery by providing for consent by and benefit sharing on mutually agreed terms with Traditional knowledge custodians prior to commencing biodiscovery activities
- ensure a Traditional knowledge obligation applies to any person using native biological material for biodiscovery, irrespective of whether the Traditional knowledge is tied to the location where the native biological resource is sourced or collected, and whether or not the material has been taken from State land or Queensland waters
- provide for a code of practice that sets out how both industry and Indigenous communities can fulfil their obligations when using Traditional knowledge; and that free and prior informed consent must be obtained from Indigenous Peoples before their knowledge is used in biodiscovery.

Respected Malanbarra/Yidinji man John Locke, who sits on the Wet Tropics Management Authority Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and RAPSCCT, had strong input into the Act's review. He is a member of the Queensland Minister for Environment's Traditional Knowledge Roundtable that is now guiding the development of the Code of Practice.

"These new laws will provide confidence to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for sharing Traditional knowledge and for benefiting from its use," Mr Locke said.

He said there are enormous opportunities for all of Queensland arising from the sharing of Traditional knowledge and the involvement of Traditional Custodians in not only providing knowledge but deriving benefit and participating in an economy that identifies, propagates, collects and commercialises that knowledge.

"Benefit sharing is a leap forward, but there is a further need to develop models of research on medicinal plants that are locally initiated and driven by Indigenous Peoples as part of their own planning for sustainable natural resource management and economic development – to be more than informants or a consultation requirement under an Act."

The changes, that came into effect on 11 August 2020, meet the obligations of the international Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources. "It also provides certainty for biodiversity enterprises in accessing global markets and complying with international obligations."

"Biodiscovery involves the collection and use of native biological material (e.g. plants, animals and other organisms) for commercial applications (e.g. pharmaceuticals and insecticides). In Queensland, biodiscovery is regulated under the Biodiscovery Act 2004."

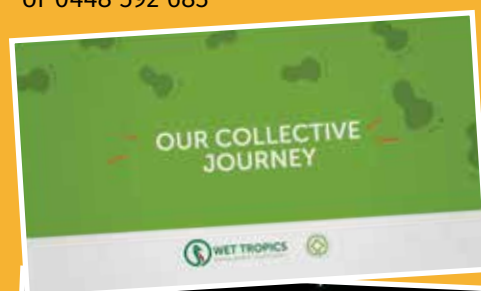
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our collective journey

On Friday 15 November, the Authority celebrated NAIDOC Day with a staff lunch. Invited guest Allison Halliday launched the 'Our Collective Journey' video, which acknowledges the significant knowledge, determination, resilience, courage, and leadership of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples that have and will continue to contribute towards the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

This video promotes and celebrates the achievements and milestones that have been accomplished within the 30 years of our collective journey. You can view the video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3nY_-90bWc&feature=youtube.

USBs will also be available with a copy of the video for distribution. If you would like one please contact Alicia.Haines@wtma.qld.gov.au or 0448 592 683



Girringun fires up for all-women controlled burns



Girringun female Indigenous Rangers (Left to Right): Olivia Mooka, Evelyn Ivey, Cindy Lou Togo, Kayla Henry and Karen Toohey.

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They're female, they're Indigenous and they're fired-up about caring for Country.

An all-women crew of rangers is leading by example in the Wet Tropics, conducting controlled burns and encouraging teenage girls to step into less-traditional cultural roles. Girringun Ranger, Cindy-Lou Togo and four other female Indigenous rangers were the fire power behind a recent cool burn at Cardwell to reduce fuel loads and improve conditions for endangered mahogany gliders.

"These are mosaic burns that don't touch the canopy and don't burn everything," Ms Togo said. "When you return you can see grass trees that are still green, and opportunities for new growth."

Terrain NRM's Jacqui Diggins said the cool burn, on seven hectares of unallocated state land, was the second this year in a series of controlled burns for ecological and hazard reduction reasons in an area from the Hull River near Tully to Crystal Creek north of Townsville. They are part of a larger project, funded by the Australian Government, to improve woodlands in mahogany glider country.

The project also supports Girringun Aboriginal Rangers to take a larger role in caring for country through land management and, with Fireland Consultancy's Justine Douglas as mentor, it provides an opportunity for more female rangers to step into leadership roles.

They're female, they're Indigenous and they're fired-up about caring for Country.

Ms Togo has been a Girringun Ranger for 10 years and has loved seeing the number of women increase in the group. "I always liked being outdoors and I thought this would be something different, when I applied for the role," she said. "Now I have a chainsaw licence, a drone licence, a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management, a coxswain ticket and more. All these tickets I never imagined I'd have..."

"We visit schools and correctional centres to show there's a pathway. We're learning from our Elders on the land, learning from others and passing those learnings on to the younger generation.

"For this burn, Evelyn Ivey was the Ranger in charge and she did a good job stepping up into that role."

Mrs Diggins said cool burns had an important role to play in improving habitat for the endangered mahogany glider.

"When woodlands thicken, it affects their ability to glide and reduces available food sources," she said. "Establishing appropriate fire regimes in mahogany glider habitat is key to reducing rainforest encroachment and sclerophyll thickening. Long term, this improves the condition of their habitat and allows each area to reach maximum occupancy of mahogany gliders."

The 'Tackling Woodland Threats' project also includes tree-planting, weed control, research into the best ways to monitor mahogany gliders and work to protect broad-leaved tea tree ecological communities and ant plants. The project is supported by Terrain NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. The Indigenous fire management program is co-funded through the Queensland Government's Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.

Updates

What's been happening in the Wet Tropics...

8–15 November: NAIDOC Week

15 November: 'Our Collective Journey' video launched

26–27 November: Authority Board Meeting 113

10 December: Human Rights Day

What's coming up in the Wet Tropics...

24–25 February: Authority Board Meeting 114

8 March: International Women's Day

17 March: National Close the Gap Day

27 March: Earth Hour (8.30pm–9.30pm)

Looking after Country Grants

The Authority would like to congratulate the recipients of the 2020 Looking after Country Grants managed by the Department of Environment and Science. There were 12 applications successful in gaining a grant and five of the applications were from Rainforest Aboriginal groups. Those successful groups were:

- **Bunda Bibandji Buluwai Indigenous Corporation**
Buluwai Rangers and Cultural Tourism Development
- **Dulabed Malanbarra and Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation**
RNTBC - Jilljirri Plan Implementation
- **Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC**
Jirrbal Country Planning
- **Watsonville Aboriginal Corporation**
Mbabaram Bringing Back Cultural Burning and protecting cultural heritage places - Watsonville
- **Western Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation**
Western Yalanji Cultural Heritage Recording Project

Expressions of interest for the Looking after Country grants are invited annually and are expected to next open in March 2021. For further information about the application and assessment process please contact the grants officer on (07) 3330 5553 or email landandsea@des.qld.gov.au

Recent Grants

Australian Heritage Grants 2020-21 Grant Opportunity

- Australian Heritage Grants fund projects that support places on the Australia's National Heritage List through improved recognition, conservation, preservation, and community engagement. To be eligible you must have written support from the Wet Tropics Management Authority and have an Australian business number (ABN). For further information visit www.business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/australian-heritage-grants
- Applications closed 7 January 2021.

Environment Restoration Fund - Safe Havens Grants

- The Environment Restoration Fund - Safe Havens grant opportunity supports the creation of new or expanded safe havens for priority threatened mammals and other threatened species. To check your eligibility visit www.business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/environment-restoration-fund-safe-havens-grants
- Applications closed 11 January 2021.