



WET TROPICS
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



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

BOARD COMMUNIQUE 124

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 Robin Clark, Dr Sally Driml, Mr William Enoch-Tranby, Ms Ailsa Lively, Professor Stephen Williams, 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 Area).

The Authority's Board of Directors met in person on Tuesday 15 August 2023. In this communique, the Board reports on the following topics:

- **Annual Business Plan and budget**
- **Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country project**
- **Bama Country and Culture project**
- **Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples update**
- **Communications strategy development**

Annual Business Plan and budget

The Board endorsed the Authority's 2023–2024 Annual Business Plan (ABP), which details activity planning linked to budget allocations. The ABP includes priority actions to ensure more effective delivery of milestones, including:

- Implementation of the first phase (2022–2024) of Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance actions
- Delivery of phase 4 (2022–2026) of the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program
- Delivery of the Bama Country and Culture project
- Implementation of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji return to Country process
- Establishment of a joint Indigenous Advisory Committee with Terrain NRM
- Development and implementation of a new communications strategy

Noting the funding level continues to decline in real terms, the Board is extremely concerned about the ability to continue to meet its obligations to the Area—particularly in light of increasing threats to the World Heritage values. The Board also expressed a concern about the stress this poses on the hardworking staff of the Authority.

Eastern Kuku Yalanji Return to Country project

The Board were pleased that the Queensland Government will fund the critical planning to allow Eastern Kuku Yalanji (EKY) Peoples to return to live on and use their traditional Country within the Area.

This project is funded for two years and is a collaboration between Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC, the Authority and the Department of Environment and Science. The project will result in a community development plan to guide return to Country for EKY Peoples across 16,000ha of Aboriginal freehold lands in the Area. Delivery will require considerable collaboration, including with local government, to resolve complex tenure issues and planning constraints to enable return to Country.

This project is significant in that it is possibly the first in Australia and has the potential for this return to Country planning approach to deliver social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits to the EKY Peoples.

Bama Country and Culture project

Invitations have been sent for a one-day workshop focused on the Bama Country and Culture project to be held on Wednesday 30 August 2023 at Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park. This will be an opportunity for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to gain a better understanding of the project and to provide their feedback to ensure the project is delivered in a culturally appropriate direction.

The Bama Country and Culture project is funded under an Australian Heritage Grant to increase awareness and understanding of the National Heritage-listed Indigenous cultural values of the Area. An interactive story map including short videos showcasing each of the Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups across the Area will be developed.

Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples update

The Board was updated on activities being undertaken by the Authority's Aboriginal Partnerships team, noting:

- The Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum has been confirmed for Wednesday 11 to Friday 13 October 2023 in Cairns and will be facilitated by Barry Hunter. Planning for this annual event brings together Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics region and representatives from government to discuss key issues relating to the collaborative management of the Area.
- The establishment of the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) has been extended to seek input from the community at the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum in October and to encourage expressions of interest.

The Authority and Terrain NRM have identified a critical need for a coordinated approach to ensure the rights, interests and priorities of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples are included in the delivery of organisational plans, policies and programs at a strategic level. The Boards of both organisations have approved a proposal to establish a skills-based committee to advise on the strategic and operational priorities across the Wet Tropics biocultural region. The IAC is not expected to be representative and will not replace any existing committees. The Boards and the organisations will continue to engage with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples as they currently do on issues that matter to the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples.

Communications strategy development

The Board was briefed on the proposed steps forward for the development of a new communications strategy. The Authority will review how it utilises all forms of communication to sell the value of the Area and our role and responsibility in managing the Area. The Authority has allocated funds to procure external expertise to develop this guiding document this financial year. Engagement of a communications specialist will be undertaken by 30 September 2023 with a draft communications strategy to be delivered by the end of the year. The strategy will be informed by consultation with the Community Consultative Committee and other key partners.

Board meeting 125 will be held online 7–8 November 2023.

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