



ANNUAL REPORT 2013–2014





Wet Tropics
Management Authority

ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

Purpose of the report

This annual report details the financial and non-financial performance of the Wet Tropics Management Authority from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014. It highlights the work, achievements, activities and strategic initiatives of the Authority, and satisfies the requirements of Queensland's *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* and *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, and the Commonwealth's *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Conservation Act 1994*.

Feedback

The annual report is an important document representing communication and accountability. The Authority values comments and welcomes feedback from readers.

Public availability

This publication can be accessed and downloaded from our website at www.wettropics.gov.au. Alternatively, hard copies of this publication can be obtained by emailing wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au.

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Further information

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27 September 2014

The Honourable Greg Hunt MP
Minister for the Environment
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to present the Annual Report 2013-2014 for the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

Under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Conservation Act 1994*, section 10 (1) 'annual report' means a report given to the Australian Government under section 63 of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (Qld).

Section 10 (2) requires you, as the Minister, to cause a copy of the annual report to be laid before each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days after the report is given to the Australian Government.

In submitting this report to you today the Authority is fulfilling its responsibilities under Australian Government legislation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Maclean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Maclean
Executive Director



Highlights from the Executive Director

The ninth of December, 2013 marked the 25th anniversary of the inscription of the Wet Tropics of Queensland on the World Heritage List.

Internationally recognised for its rich biodiversity; as an exemplar of the earth's evolutionary history; as habitat for numerous rare and endemic species; and for its spectacular landscapes, the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area makes an extraordinarily important contribution to nature conservation in Australia on behalf of the global community.

It is also important to acknowledge that the Indigenous cultural values of the Wet Tropics have been included in Australia's National Heritage list. The Authority pays its respects to the Rainforest Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of this important landscape and in particular to elders past and present.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority was established to assist the Australian and Queensland Governments to fulfil Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention in relation to the Wet Tropics. The Authority is jointly accountable to the Australian and Queensland environment and heritage ministers.

The Authority has diverse roles in support of the Wet Tropics community. As well as ensuring protection through administration of the statutory *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*, the Authority builds partnerships with the community, Rainforest Aboriginal people, researchers, the tourism industry and with government departments and agencies to advance the conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

2013-14 represents another year of achievement for the Authority and its partners in World Heritage management. Some highlights of the year are summarised below.

Wet Tropics vegetation mapping

The Authority finalised a major program of mapping the native vegetation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the wider Wet Tropics bioregion. The mapping is the culmination of over eight years of research and development and is the most comprehensive vegetation mapping ever undertaken in the region. The maps and associated descriptive information are available on a credit card-sized USB stick; as PDF files on the Authority's website or on-line through a link on the Authority's website to the e-atlas. Launched on 6 December 2013 by Professor Darren Crayn, Director of the Australian Tropical Herbarium, this product made a very appropriate contribution to the 25th anniversary celebration of the listing of the Wet Tropics.

Repairing the Rainforest

Also launched on 6 December 2013 to coincide with the 25th anniversary of listing was the second edition of *Repairing the Rainforest* by Dr Steve Goosem and Mr Nigel Tucker. This volume captures and communicates the experience and expertise developed in the region in relation to rainforest restoration. It updates the highly popular 1995 first edition that has had influence far beyond the Wet Tropics, guiding rainforest restoration projects as far away as South East Asia. The authority provided copies of the book to community revegetation and catchment management groups that have sold them to raise funds for community projects.

Research partnerships

Knowledge based on high-quality research is the principal currency of the Authority's work. The Authority was delighted to invite James Cook University Vice Chancellor, Professor Sandra Harding to launch the Authority's learning landscape initiative. Coinciding with the launch was the publication of a learning landscapes brochure that highlights past research achievements and the contributions research has made to management in the Wet Tropics. The brochure summarises the research priorities of the Wet Tropics Research Strategy and is an important communication tool in securing continued research investment in the Wet Tropics.

Consistent with its knowledge-brokering role, the Authority was pleased to secure a grant from the National Environment Research Program (NERP) to assist in linking NERP funded rainforest research with rainforest land managers, infrastructure providers and other current and potential research users. The project, delivered in partnership with the Wet Tropics Scientific Advisory Committee and research institutions focuses on Queensland government departments and agencies.

The Authority played an active role in governance of the NERP Tropical Ecosystems hub, valuing the opportunity to influence research priorities and facilitate communications. Ensuring an appropriate investment into rainforest research from NERP's successor program will remain a high priority for the Authority.

Wet Tropics tourism

Tourism ventures based on the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area make an enormously important contribution to the economy of Far North Queensland. As well as benefiting economically from the World Heritage Area, the tourism industry is a vital partner in the presentation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area - a duty of State parties under the World Heritage convention.

The Authority's Tour Guide Programs, developed and delivered in partnership with Savannah Guides, ensures World Heritage tour guides have the knowledge and skills to deliver world class interpretive experiences. Supported by a Commonwealth grant under the TQUAL program, the training and associated workshops have strong support within the industry. The Authority is particularly gratified at the significant interest shown by Rainforest Aboriginal tour guides.

The Authority has continued to provide leadership in the nature-based tourism sector in the Wet Tropics as a participant in the National Landscapes program. Jointly administered by the Director of National Parks and Tourism Australia, the program aims to build partnerships between tourism and conservation in highlighting the best of the best of Australia's nature-based tourism experiences. The Authority was pleased to accept on behalf of Wet Tropics tourism industry and conservation partners the program's outstanding achievement Award for 2013.

Yellow crazy ant eradication

Based on observations of its impacts elsewhere, the Authority is gravely concerned at the risk an infestation of the exotic pest, the yellow crazy ant poses for the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics. In 2013, the Authority secured a \$2M grant from the Australian government to support an eradication project targeting an infestation of ants on the boundary of the World Heritage Area near Cairns. The Authority has built an extensive network of collaborators in the community, with state and local government agencies and with research institutions to establish a major program of survey, baiting and monitoring that will extend over four years. The first of nine rounds of aerial and land-based baiting commenced in the first half of 2014.

Funding

In late 2013, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, The Honourable Greg Hunt MP, demonstrated continuing support for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the role of the Authority through the provision of a further five years of baseline World Heritage funding (\$13.4M over five years). The Queensland Government, through the Honourable Andrew Powell MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection has also continued its funding support for the Wet Tropics (\$1.8M/year).

The Authority and its partners and community stakeholders are grateful for this outcome, which provides an essential platform for further partnership and project development in support of the World Heritage Area and its communities. These very welcome allocations need to be considered in the context of the overall economic contribution of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Data presented in an economic analysis of Australia's World Heritage Areas in 2008 demonstrated

that the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area generates in excess of \$400 of economic activity for every dollar of combined Commonwealth and State management spending.

Queensland World Heritage Review

In March 2014, the Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection announced a review of management arrangements for Queensland's terrestrial World Heritage properties, including the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. In announcing the review, the Minister said that, "what is required is a more consistent model of management where we improve, simplify and maximise the protection of the state's World Heritage Areas." A delegation of Wet Tropics board directors and representatives of the Authority's advisory committees joined their counterparts from the Australia Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh), Fraser Island and the Gondwana Rainforest of Australia properties at a workshop in late March 2014 that discussed issues and options for change.

Board of directors

Division 2 of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Queensland Act) establishes the Board of Directors for the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Directors are appointed by the Queensland Governor in Council upon the nomination of the Commonwealth and Queensland. Following the retirement of former chairperson, Associate Professor Peter Valentine and directors Cr Julia Leu and Dr Alastair Birtles in the first half of 2013, it was not possible to achieve the quorum defined by the Queensland Act. As a result no Board meetings were convened during 2013-14. However, the two remaining directors, Dr Rosemary Hill and Ms Leah Talbot continued to play an active and valuable role in support of the Authority.

Advisory committees

Section 40 of the Act requires the Authority to establish a Scientific Advisory Committee and Community Consultative Committee. These committees are appointed by the Authority's Board. The three year term of appointment of both committees ended in early 2014. The Authority is very grateful for the leadership, advice and support provided by these committees over the past three years.

Partnerships

Achieving the objectives of the World Heritage Convention in the Wet Tropics would be entirely impossible without the support and collaboration of a huge network of partners in community, industry and government. Examples include the schoolchildren who contributed their rainforest artwork to the Australian Tourism Exchange Wet Tropics poster competition; community volunteers restoring rainforests through revegetation and pest control activities; Rainforest Aboriginal people working to preserve and pass on their cultural heritage; researchers building knowledge about the Area and its management;

infrastructure providers making positive choices about design and maintenance that protect rainforest values; tour guides and the volunteers in information centres who share their knowledge with visitors; the international volunteers working at the Authority and with its partners; and the hard-working staff of numerous state, local and commonwealth government agency partners, in particular the rangers in the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing.

It is important that I also acknowledge and thank the dedicated staff of the Authority itself for their efforts. Without the collective effort and support of all of these people, many anonymous but all of them appreciated, Australia's pride in the Wet Tropics of Queensland would be much diminished.



Andrew Maclean
Executive Director

Our Organisation

World Heritage and National Heritage listing

The World Heritage List includes 1007 properties forming part of the cultural and natural heritage which the World Heritage Committee considers as having Outstanding Universal Value. These include 779 cultural, 197 natural and 31 mixed properties in 161 State Parties.

As of 30 June 2014, 191 State Parties have ratified the World Heritage Convention. Australia became a signatory in 1974 and at 30 June 2014 there were 19 Australian properties on the World Heritage List. World Heritage listing is recognition by the international community that a place is such an outstanding example of the world's natural or cultural heritage that its conservation is of value to all people.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area ('the World Heritage Area' or 'the Area') has outstanding natural values, meeting all four natural criteria for World Heritage listing and fulfilling the necessary conditions of integrity. The Wet Tropics of Queensland is considered to:

- contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance - *Criterion (vii)*
- be an outstanding example representing the major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, and significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features - *Criterion (viii)*

- be an outstanding example representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals - *Criterion (ix)*
- contain the most important significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation - *Criterion (x)*.

In May 2007 the Area was also listed on Australia's National Heritage List. The Area was listed for the five National Heritage criteria that correspond to its World Heritage (natural) criteria. The National Heritage criteria include:

- the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history - *Criterion (a)*
- the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history - *Criterion (b)*
- the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history - *Criterion (c)*

- the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments - *Criterion (d)* the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group - *Criterion (e)*.

On 9 November 2012, the Australian Government announced the inclusion of the national Indigenous heritage values as part of the existing National Heritage listing for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Aboriginal Rainforest people of the Wet Tropics of Queensland have lived continuously in the rainforest environment for at least 5000 years and this is the only place in Australia where Aboriginal people have permanently inhabited a tropical rainforest environment. The criteria for listing are:

- the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period – *Criterion (f)*
- the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of indigenous tradition - *Criterion (i)*.

National Heritage listing provides protection under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and that the Commonwealth must use its best endeavours to ensure a management plan that is consistent with the management principles is prepared and implemented in cooperation with the State.



Administration of the Act

Enabling legislation

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area is managed under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Queensland Act) and the *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act 1994* (the Commonwealth Act). These Acts implement Australia's international duty for the protection, conservation, presentation, rehabilitation and transmission to future generations of the World Heritage Area.

The Queensland Act establishes the Wet Tropics Management Authority and provides the legal basis for the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* (the Plan) that regulates land use activities in the Area through a zoning and permit system. The *Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Management Scheme* is an intergovernmental agreement signed by the Prime Minister of Australia and the Premier of Queensland in 1990. It sets out broad structural and funding arrangements for the management of the Area. The agreement is incorporated as Schedule 1 to the Queensland Act and given effect by section 3 of the Commonwealth Act. An amended version of the Agreement was adopted in 2011.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority

The Wet Tropics Management Authority ('the Authority') was set up to ensure Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention is met in relation to the World Heritage Area. It is funded

by the Australian Government and the Queensland Government, reporting to both on its performance against agreed outcomes. The Authority is a body corporate, with statutory powers defined under the Queensland Act. The Authority's functions, as defined under section 10 of the Queensland Act, are to:

- develop and implement policies and programs for management of the Area
- formulate performance indicators for the implementation of approved policies and programs
- advise and make recommendations to the Minister and the Ministerial Council
- prepare and implement management plans for the Area
- administer funding arrangements
- facilitate and enter into Cooperative Management Agreements
- rehabilitate and restore the Area
- gather, research, analyse and disseminate information on the Area
- develop public and community education programs
- promote the Area locally, nationally and internationally
- liaise with the Australian and Queensland Governments, agencies and international organisations
- monitor the state of the Area
- advise and report to the Minister and the Ministerial Council on the state of the Area.

Subject to performing its functions in a way which is consistent with the protection of the natural heritage values of the Area, the Authority must, as far as practicable, also perform its functions in a way that is consistent with the objectives and principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development and with the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment.

Our contribution to government objectives

Consistent with its legislative roles and functions, the Wet Tropics Management Authority endeavours to ensure that its service delivery initiatives contributes to the Australian and Queensland Government objectives for the Wet Tropics community.

Statutory reporting obligations

Each year the Wet Tropics Management Authority prepares a report on the administration of the Act during the year, financial statements for the year, and a report on the state of the Area, as required under section 63(1) of the Queensland Act and section 10 of the Commonwealth Act.

Management structure

The intergovernmental agreement provides for, inter alia, the establishment of the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council, consisting of Commonwealth and State Ministers. Its function is to coordinate policy and funding for the Area.

In August 2011 the intergovernmental agreement was updated to reflect the decision of the Council of Australian Governments to abolish property specific Ministerial Councils, including the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council, and to make other minor amendments required to ensure the Agreement remains current and relevant. It recognises that both the

Australian Government and Queensland Government have joint interests in and responsibilities for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

Subject to amendment of the Queensland Act, several of the functions of Ministerial Council will be re-allocated to the Australian and Queensland Environment Ministers acting in cooperation. Other functions will be directly discharged by either the Australian or Queensland Minister.

A board of directors is set up under the Queensland Act and consists of seven directors, six of whom serve in a part time capacity. Two directors are nominated by the Australian Government and two by the Queensland Government. The Chair and a designated Aboriginal director are nominated by the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council. The executive director of the Authority is a non-voting board director. The Board's key function is to implement programs to meet Australia's international obligations for the Area under the World Heritage Convention.

The Authority operates as an administrative unit within the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. As part of the Queensland public sector, the Authority is subject to public sector legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines governing administrative functions and arrangements. The Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is the accountable officer for the Authority under the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2009*. The Authority is responsible to the Director-General regarding compliance with State Government administrative and financial standards.

The Authority is a small organisation and works in partnership with other agencies, stakeholders and the wider community. The Authority has produced a range of strategic policy and planning documents which guide management of the World Heritage Area, consistent with its legislative responsibilities.

While the Authority is the lead agency responsible for policy, planning and the coordination of management in the Area, it is not directly responsible for on-ground management. Day-to-day management activities such as infrastructure maintenance and pest control are the responsibility of the relevant land managers which include the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing; the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection; the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; and community infrastructure service providers for power, water and roads, and 11 local governments.

An annual partnership agreement is developed each year between the Authority and Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and (DNPRSR) to prioritise and coordinate management activities in the protected area estate within the World Heritage Area. The partnership agreement outlines products and services to be delivered by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) under funding provided by the Queensland Government for World Heritage management.

The Authority also works in partnership with the regional community as a means of building a sense of ownership and sharing both the benefits and burdens of best practice management. In particular, the Authority consults with the community, both through its committees and directly and extensively on matters with significant community impact, such as management plans.

Wet Tropics Ministerial Council

At June 2014 Ministerial Council comprised:

- The Honourable Andrew Powell MP, Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection (Chair)
- The Honourable Greg Hunt MP, Australian Minister for the Environment.

Ministerial Council did not meet between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2014.

Wet Tropics Management Authority Board of Directors

The board of directors is set up under the Queensland Act and consists of seven directors. Two directors are nominated by the Australian Government and two by the Queensland Government. The Chair and a designated Aboriginal director are nominated by the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council.

Following the retirement of former chairperson, Associate Professor Peter Valentine and directors Cr Julia Leu and Dr Alastair Birtles in the first half of 2013, it was not possible to achieve the quorum defined by the Act so during 2013-14 no Board meetings were convened. As at 30 June 2014 the directors of the Authority were:

- Mr Andrew Maclean (Executive Director)
- Dr Rosemary Hill
- Ms Leah Talbot.

Board directors are remunerated in accordance with the *Remuneration of Part-Time Chairs and Members of Government Boards, Committees and Statutory Authorities* as approved by the Governor in Council. The overall cost of the Board in 2013-2014 was \$14,616. This included special assignment fees, all necessary and reasonable travel expenses and other general operating costs. In 2013-14 most expenses were incurred through participation of directors and advisory committee members in the conduct of the Queensland terrestrial World Heritage Review.

Committees and liaison groups

The Authority has two statutory advisory committees appointed by the Board under section 40 (1) of the Queensland Act. They are the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) and the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). These committees meet quarterly prior to Board meetings and advise the Authority on programs and research for the management of the Area.

The three year term of appointment of the CCC and the SAC ended in May 2014. In the absence of a Board, members of both committees have agreed to continue to meet to ensure continuity of scientific and community expertise and advice which benefit both the Authority and the wider community in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Community Consultative Committee

The CCC has the function of advising the Authority on the views of the community on the Authority's policies and programs in relation to the Wet Tropics Area.

The members of the CCC are selected as individuals to represent a broad range of community views, knowledge and interest

from throughout the Wet Tropics region. Committee members represent a broad range of expertise and skills including conservation, education, tourism, recreation, local government, Aboriginal culture, science and primary industries. Members and observers of the CCC comprised:

Ms Rhonda Sorensen (Chair)

Ms Bryony Barnett (Deputy Chair)

Mrs Pam Birkett

Ms Ellie Bock

Mr Greg Bruce

Mr Chris Cameron

Mr Pino Giandomenico

Ms Darlene Irvine

Mr Ross Rogers

Ms Joann Schmider

Mr Warren Singleton

Ms Doon McColl, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, (observer)

Ms Claire Grant, DNPRSR (QPWS) (observer).

Some of the major issues discussed by the CCC in 2013-2014 were the yellow crazy ant eradication program; the Queensland Government review of terrestrial World Heritage Areas; development of Wet Tropics Watch; and a review of the operating guidelines of the committee.

The CCC met on: 26 July 2013; 8 November 2013; and 28 March 2014. The CCC cost \$2674 to operate, mostly for catering, venue hire and reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses and travel expenses. Members do not receive sitting fees.

Scientific Advisory Committee

Members of the SAC come from a broad range of disciplines including the natural, ecological, socio-cultural and economic sciences. Most are actively involved in tropical research programs in the Wet Tropics region and northern Australia.

During the year major issues where SAC advice was sought included the development of the Wet Tropics Learning Landscape initiative, biosecurity issues, the development of a reporting framework to monitor the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area; research investment in the Wet Tropics; and connectivity conservation priorities. Members and observers of the SAC comprised:

Professor Steve Williams, Centre for Tropical Biology and Climate Change, James Cook University (Chair)

Dr Susan Laurance, Tropical Leader in Rainforest Ecology, James Cook University (Deputy Chair)

Dr Damien Burrows, Director TropWater, Tropical Water and Aquatic Ecosystem Research

Professor Carla Catterall, Theme Leader, Environmental Restoration and Management, Environmental Futures Centre, Griffith University

Professor Darren Crayn, Director Australian Tropical Herbarium

Dr Miriam Goosem, Principal Research Fellow, James Cook University

Dr Alex Kutt, Adjunct Associate Professor, James Cook University

Ms Henrietta Marrie, Adjunct Professor, United Nations University

Dr Dan Metcalfe, Program Leader- Ecology Program, Ecosystem Services, CSIRO

Dr Lea Scherl, Adjunct Associate Professor, James Cook University

Professor Jeff Sayer, Professor of Conservation and Development Practice, James Cook University

Mr Gerry Turpin, Queensland Herbarium, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

Dr Christine Williams, Assistant Director General, Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Dr David Westcott, Principal Research Scientist, Tropical Landscapes Program, CSIRO

Ms Claire Grant, DNPRSR (QPWS) (observer).

Members of the Scientific Advisory Committee met on: 8 August 2013; 8 November 2013; and 3 February 2014. The SAC cost \$3,130 to operate, mostly for catering, venue hire and reimbursements for out of pocket and travel expenses. Members do not receive sitting fees.

Conservation Sector Liaison Group

The Conservation Sector Liaison Group (CSLG) is established under section 40 (1) (b) of the Queensland Act. The function of the CSLG is to provide conservation sector input to the Authority in relation to key conservation challenges associated with the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area; to channel information and opinion between the conservation sector and the Authority; and to facilitate and support implementation of the Authority's conservation agenda.

Membership includes a broad range of groups who are working for conservation in the Wet Tropics. Members and observers comprised:

Ms Angelika Ziehl, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (Acting Chair)

Mr Peter Smith, Wildlife Protection Society of Queensland (Deputy Chair)

Dr Alice Crabtree, Conservation Volunteers

Dr Sigrid Heise-Pavlov, Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group

Mr Luke Jackson, Quoll Seekers Network/
Australian Quoll Conservancy

Mr Tony Jurgensen, Johnstone Ecological Society

Mr Jeremy Little, The Wilderness Society

Margaret Moorhouse, Alliance to Save
Hinchinbrook/North Queensland Conser-
vation Council

Ms Deborah Pergolotti, FrogSafe

Mr Peter Rowles, Community for Coastal
and Cassowary Conservation

Ms Angela Strain, Environmental Defend-
ers Office, NQ

Ms Susie Batemen, Biosecurity Queensland
(observer)

Ms Claire Grant (Queensland Parks and
Wildlife Service) (observer)

Mr Travis Sydes (Far North Queensland
Regional Organisation of Councils)
(observer)

Some of the major issues discussed by the CSLG in 2013-2014 were fire management and the Wet Tropics; the draft Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment; the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area; changes to the vegetation laws in Queensland; and the yellow crazy ant eradication program;

The Conservation Sector Liaison Group met four times on 23 September 2013; 2 December 2013; 10 March 2014 and 16 June 2014. In 2013-14, the cost for convening the CSLG meetings was \$2,905. Costs incurred were primarily for catering purposes and out-of-pocket travel expenses of members. Members do not receive sitting fees.

Wet Tropics Tourism Network

The Wet Tropics Tourism Network provides a key point of contact between the Wet Tropics Management Authority and tourism operators who utilise the World Heritage Area. Meetings provide a formal channel of communication where participants advise and provide comment to the Authority on policy directions, projects and strategies that specifically regard tourism.

The focus of the network is to facilitate partnerships to present World Heritage values, and as a result, further strengthening and developing the Wet Tropics tourism industry. Network membership provides the Authority with intelligence and insight into current issues around access to protected areas for tourism purposes and the need to strengthen the quality and range of tourism products in the region.

The Tourism Network comprises representatives from the tourism industry, local operators, local and state government agencies, local conservation groups and Rainforest Aboriginal people. Over 120 individuals and organisations have registered to participate at meetings, and participants choose to attend meetings that are of interest to them.

At 30 June 2014, the Wet Tropics Tourism Network organisational membership included over 120 tourism businesses, local and state government organisations, Indigenous organisations, individuals and private tour operator businesses.



2013-2018 Strategic Plan Goals

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is organised around the seven strategic goals that describe the ultimate outcomes the Authority aspires to. The goals are:

- 1 The Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is protected and maintained consistent with Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention.
- 2 Communities derive benefit and value from the World Heritage Area, are effectively involved in planning and management and their stewardship of the World Heritage Area is recognised and supported.
- 3 Rainforest Aboriginal people are supported in expressing their knowledge, culture and management practices on country.
- 4 The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is used, enjoyed and celebrated as the world's finest learning landscape for tropical rainforest and its sustainable management.
- 5 World Heritage Area values are supported and presented through sustainable tourism.
- 6 Enduring partnerships enhance the integrity of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, its presentation and its function in the life of the community.
- 7 The Wet Tropics Management Authority is an accountable and capable organisation.

Progress towards the goals, objectives and milestones in the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan provide the framework for 2013-14 annual report.

The Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is protected and maintained consistent with Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention

The Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area lies at the heart of its governance and management regime. The protection and conservation of the value of the Area requires an effective management and regulatory regime. The Authority has an important role in coordinating the contribution of others in support of the Area. Pests, weeds, disease and climate change are identified as currently posing the greatest threat to the integrity of the World Heritage Area.

Review of the Operation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998

Under the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 (the Queensland Act) a review of the operation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 (the Plan) is required every 10 years. While a review of the Plan was completed in 2011, proposed amendments to the Plan resulting from the review have not as yet been made. The Authority has prepared a draft Wet Tropics Amendment Management Plan for consideration by the Wet Tropics Board, however further progress has not been possible during this financial year due to delays in the appointment of a Chair and other Board vacancies.

Administration of the Wet Tropics Management Plan

The Plan regulates activities in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area) that have the potential to impact on the integrity of the Area. The Plan includes criteria for the assessment of permit applications for construction and maintenance of roads, powerlines, water supplies and communication facilities.

Avoiding impacts on World Heritage integrity - advice and assistance to stakeholders

Community services infrastructure providers

Authority staff undertook regular liaison with staff and contractors working on the planning, building and maintenance of community services infrastructure in the World Heritage Area. As part of this liaison, the Authority provided advice on actions that could be taken to avoid or mitigate impacts on the Area. Major service providers included Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR), local governments, Powerlink Queensland, Stanwell Pty Ltd and Ergon Energy, as well as agencies providing telecommunication facilities.

Rainforest Aboriginal people

Staff provided advice and support to Aboriginal organisations and Councils to support their management of natural resources and mitigate threats to the integrity of their country. Staff facilitated consultation between local government and agencies undertaking construction and maintenance activities in the Area with relevant Traditional Owner groups. These discussions help all parties better understand the potential impact of projects and maintenance activities on cultural and natural heritage values.

Minor and inconsequential activities

Activities deemed to be of minor and inconsequential impact under the Plan do not require a Wet Tropics permit to be issued. Staff reviewed and provided advice regarding a number of proposals that were deemed to have only minor and inconsequential impacts on the Area. For example, Cairns Regional Council's proposal to construct a viewing platform at Crystal Cascades and the upgrade of the Kirrama Range Road by the Cassowary Coast Regional Council.

Assessment of Wet Tropics permit applications

Authority staff undertook auditing and provided advice to agencies undertaking activities in the World Heritage Area under existing permits, particularly in regard to work being carried out on the Main Roads network. Staff also provided pre-lodgement advice to agencies in regard to various proposals under consideration. Authority staff assessed and issued new permits under the Plan to the following agencies:

- WTMA13004 Variety Club of Queensland to conduct an event on a presentation restricted road
- WTMA13003 and WTMA13006 Cassowary Coast Regional Council to upgrade water supply facilities
- WTMA13005 Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation to construct a walking trail
- WTMA14003 Department of Defence for maintenance of infrastructure.

The de-amalgamation of some local government Councils required the re-issuing of infrastructure maintenance permits to the new and former entities.

Ten Mile Station

Ten Mile Station is a grazing lease in the upper Bloomfield Valley within the Area. The lease is subject to a natural resource management agreement with the Authority to protect the natural values of the lease from grazing impacts. Fencing work has progressed and Authority staff have been monitoring plots at different sites as indicators for any emerging natural resource impacts resulting from grazing.

Investigation and enforcement

In early 2014, concerns were raised about road widening work conducted by Cook Shire Council between Rossville and Ayton which led to excessive sediment load turbidity from runoff in the adjoining Gap Creek. The works had been undertaken without a Wet Tropics permit or consultation with Authority staff. Authority staff worked with the Council to ameliorate the impacts, reinstate sediment control measures and re-establish communication protocols. Staff from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) issued an enforcement notice under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

In conjunction with EHP staff, Authority staff investigated a potential infringement associated with destruction of a listed threatened plant under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* at Bramston Beach. However, it was determined that a prosecution was not warranted.

Training of Conservation Officers

All conservation officers under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* are, by virtue of their office, authorised under the *Queensland Act* to undertake investigation and enforcement activities in relation to the Plan. The Authority updated the training package that was provided to QPWS conservation officers on their investigation and enforcement powers and responsibilities under the Plan.

Land dealings

The Authority provided advice on development proposals, including those outside the Area that may affect the cultural and World Heritage natural values. Authority staff provided formal advice on seven occasions to the State Land Asset Management Group within the Department of Natural Resources and Mines regarding land dealings including proposed lease renewals, free holding applications and proposed road closures. Staff also responded to six inquiries concerning the location of particular properties relative to the Area.

A reporting framework for Outstanding Universal Value

In the light of the increased emphasis on protection and management of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, the Authority commenced development of a draft reporting framework which reflects the three pillars of OUV. The three pillars are:

- The property meets one or more of the ten World Heritage criteria
- The property meets the conditions of integrity
- The property meets the requirements for protection and management to ensure its safeguarding.

The draft reporting framework aims to satisfy the World Heritage Committee requirements for assessing condition, integrity, protection and management of the Area.

**World Heritage planning,
conservation and rehabilitation**

*Eradication of yellow crazy ants in and
around the Wet Tropics World Heritage
Area*

In November 2012 the Authority was advised by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, the Honourable Greg Hunt MP, that it had been successful in its submission seeking a five-year grant totalling \$1.9M for the eradication of yellow crazy ant infestations in and around the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The yellow crazy ant is one of the world's 100 worst invasive species and pose a serious threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Area.

There are two main areas of infestation threatening the Area. The main area is located around the southern suburbs of Cairns with a total area of infestation of approximately 600ha of which about 200ha is forested, 200ha is sugarcane and 200ha of residential area. The ants have now advanced into about 30ha of the World Heritage Area. The other infestation is at Russett Park, a rural residential area north of the Barron River near Kuranda. This infestation is about 30ha and is within 500m of the World Heritage boundary.

Every year, for the first three years of the project, a triple-treatment program will be implemented. The treatment involves application of insect baits with attractants that target yellow crazy ants. Treatment times are scheduled to have maximum impact on the ants. These times are based on different stages of the reproductive lifecycle of the ants. Project partners include an expert in the field of tramp ant control, to provide scientific services in this regard.

The first round of the 2014 triple treatment program commenced in May 2014, with forested areas (including the World Heritage Area component) and sugarcane paddocks being baited via helicopter. Ground-treatment of residential areas commenced in April 2014.

Local government planning

The Authority provided general advice and formal comments on several local government planning schemes during 2013-2014, particularly for Cairns Regional Council and Cassowary Coast Regional Council.

Natural resource management

The Authority participated in cross-agency activities associated with the management of natural resources including NRM bodies, QPWS, and the Cairns Hillslopes Fire Management Committee. Staff also provided advice to landholders within the Area about activities regulated by the Wet Tropics Plan on their land. With a view to reducing the level of animal mortality that might result from a significant increase in cane haulage on the road network, staff briefed drivers and management of the transport company involved.

Communities derive benefit and value from the World Heritage Area, are effectively involved in planning and management and their stewardship of the World Heritage Area is recognised and supported

Community support for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area) and engagement in its stewardship is vital to ensuring the Area is protected and that it remains a valued global asset. Community groups in and around the Area actively participate in enhancing the natural and cultural values of the Area and need to be recognised and appreciated. Landholders and neighbours of the Area have an important role in monitoring threats and are valuable partners to management agencies.

Working with the Wet Tropics community

Celebrating 25 years of World Heritage

During 2013, communities helped celebrate the 25th anniversary of the inscription of the Wet Tropics of Queensland on the World Heritage List. Much of the engagement in the second half of 2013-14 was focused around this milestone. The Authority rolled out a communication campaign to engage our global communities in celebrating this anniversary.

The Authority established a 25 year portal on its website and a 25 year anniversary logo depicting the *Bowenia* leaf, a symbol of ancient lineage of our World Heritage Area's flora. The logo was used on the Authority's products and communications this year.

The Authority coordinated a series of Saturday talks at the Cairns Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre between October 2013 and January 2014, complementing the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area display installed there during that period. The talks provided community groups with a platform to raise awareness of their work in the Wet Tropics.

The Authority was delighted to be involved in the visit of Tourism Australia's 'Best Job in the World' Park Ranger Elisa Detrez who helped cut a 25th anniversary cake at the Trees for Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (TREAT) nursery whilst visiting the Atherton Tablelands in October 2013. The combined efforts of QPWS and Tourism Queensland helped bring this anniversary milestone to international attention whilst acknowledging the important work of a key community group involved in restoring rainforests in the Wet Tropics.

The Authority encouraged visitor centres across the region to hold their own special event to celebrate the anniversary and many enthusiastically took up the opportunity, including the Kuranda, Malanda, Tully, Babinda and Mission Beach Visitor Information Centres.

The Authority also held its own 25 year birthday celebration with invited guests at the Cairns Botanic Gardens on 7 December 2013. Highlights were the launching of the *Authority's Wet Tropics Vegetation Maps* and the second edition of the hugely popular *Repairing the Rainforest* book. In producing a commemorative 25 years video, the Authority was able to organise a video message from the Honourable Bob Hawke AC GCL for the occasion, recalling the listing of the Wet Tropics during his term as Prime Minister. The commemorative

videos are available on the Wet Tropics website. The Authority also acknowledged the continuous support of the community in taking care of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area through their initiatives and commitment to maintaining its values.

The Authority set up stalls at Townsville's Ecofiesta and the Cairns *Sustainability Expo*, both in July 2013. The Townsville Ecofiesta allowed the Authority to reach southern audiences of the Wet Tropics, while the *Sustainability Expo* in Cairns reached the wide variety of audiences in the city.

Cassowary Recovery Team

The Authority Chairs and provides secretariat support for the Cassowary Recovery Team which oversees the implementation of the Recovery Plan for the endangered southern cassowary under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Membership includes a broad range of government agencies, organisations and individuals who are working for cassowary conservation in the Wet Tropics.

Education

Newspapers in Education

The Authority sponsored the Newspapers in Education (NiE) section of The Cairns Post newspaper for the tenth year. The *Keep It Wild* poster competition was promoted in NiE and additional stories will be written in the remaining calendar year focusing on yellow crazy ants, cassowaries and other relevant issues.

Keep it Wild poster competition

The Authority partnered with Tourism Australia and Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) to promote the region at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) held at the Cairns Convention Centre from 11 to 15 May 2014. Travel agents from around the world visited Cairns to learn from, and do business with, sellers of Australian tourism. The theme of this year's poster competition was 'Tourism is everyone's business'. The competition was held in the first school term, and entries were displayed at the Cairns Pier shopping centre during the Easter school holiday break along with the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area display panels. Over 350 entries were received from young artists from primary schools around the region.

Messages expressed through the posters focused on why the region is special and on protecting our reef and rainforests. Winners were presented with prizes donated by Big Cat Green Island Cruises and Skyrail Rainforest Cableway at the ATE movie night on the Cairns Esplanade on the 14th May 2014. The event and winning entries were promoted on the Wet Tropics website and Facebook page.

Communications

News and media

The Authority continued to promote its projects and the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics to the media and the wider community. The Wet Tropics being ranked the second most irreplaceable World Heritage Area on earth gained considerable print, television and radio media attention. The implementation of the yellow crazy ant eradication program continued to be a hot topic in the region and a key media and communications focus for the Authority. Updates and feature articles regarding the eradication program featured regularly

across all aspects of the media. The Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program and the associated field schools were popular with the tourism industry and were cross promoted through regional tourism networks. The news and events section of the Wet Tropics website was regularly updated ensuring the public were aware of issues relevant to the Area.

Wet Tropics eNews

Publication of the Authority's quarterly eNews continued during the year, with the objective of ensuring the Wet Tropics community is well informed about the World Heritage Area and the work of the Authority and its partners

Interpretation, website, digital media and on-line engagement

During the second half of 2013 the Authority developed a series of 12 interpretive panels which were displayed at the Cairns Botanic Gardens between October 2013 and January 2014.

The Authority also partnered with the Cairns Regional Council to produce 10 street pole banners placed on poles on Grafton Street in the central business district. Highlighting the 25th anniversary of the World Heritage Area, the banners provided an attractive visual display in a central and popular part of the city. The Authority produced a new colourful eight page brochure celebrating the Outstanding Universal Value and cultural values of the Area. The organisation also continued to develop other communication material such as a 'Learning Landscape' brochure which promoted research opportunities for investment.

Wet Tropics website

The Wet Tropics website continued to be an important communications and engagement tool, highlighting news and events throughout the year as well as providing an easy portal into 25th anniversary activities. According to website statistics for 2013-14 there was an average of 2.27 pages viewed per visit, with over 77,000 people visiting the website and 174,694 page views recorded throughout the year; up by over 5000 from the previous year.

Social media

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Facebook page continued to promote World Heritage Area experiences, and communicate updates on issues and events from around the region. It has also been a valuable tool in distributing messages such as those relating to yellow crazy ants and wildlife conservation. The Facebook page has doubled the number of 'likes' during 2013-14, increasing from 497 to 1052 highlighting the increasing reach it is having. The most popular posts are those that reflect the outstanding natural features and wildlife of the Area.

Since its inception in June 2011, the Authority's Facebook 'friend' engagement has grown steadily. About two thirds of the Facebook friends are Australians, of which half are from local Wet Tropics communities. Engagement peaked in June 2014 with interest in yellow crazy ants, cassowaries and other wildlife posts that were re-posted, shared and reached over 1500 Facebook users.

Aboriginal people are supported in expressing their knowledge, culture and management practices on country

For thousands of years Rainforest Aboriginal people have been an integral part of the land and seascape of the Wet Tropics region, living in and around the World Heritage Area and using traditional practices to manage 'country' and live sustainably from the natural resources. The Authority recognises the contribution Rainforest Aboriginal people continue to make to the contemporary management of the World Heritage Area. The Authority works closely with Rainforest Aboriginal people, respecting their traditional lore and cultural knowledge, rights, interests and aspirations towards best practice management of the World Heritage Area.

A proactive, conciliatory and collaborative partnership approach to supporting Traditional Owners' equitable and culturally respectful participation requires adequate capacity at all levels of engagement. The opportunity for Traditional Owners to express their knowledge, cultures and practices for 'looking after country' is critical to their well-being and yields social and economic dividends for the broader community as well as environmental and cultural benefits. The Authority seeks to provide recognition and support for improved leadership, governance and operational competencies through capacity development, and equitable participation in decision-making, corporate development and employment.

The Authority's partnership approach includes working with Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and their organisations, including Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRB), Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC), Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (RNTBC) Land Trusts and Land/Sea management corporations, Commonwealth and State government agencies, local government councils, research institutions, NRM Bodies and other non government organisations (NGOs).

Relationships and partnerships

The Authority builds sustainable relationships at local, sub-regional, regional and national levels, developed through dedicated and strategic resource allocation. During 2013-14 the Authority:

- maintained, extended and implemented a database of Rainforest Aboriginal contacts and communication protocols across the region
- supported the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance (RAPA), a representative body for Rainforest Aboriginal people across the Wet Tropics region, to conduct a three day workshop 'Warrama' that focussed on regional issues relevant to Traditional Owners
- partnered with Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, a key organisation delivering on ground outcomes for World Heritage management, to investigate pathways for attracting new investment
- engaged with Jirrbal and Ngadjon-jii Traditional Owners, and in collaboration with QPWS, assess options for the implementation of commitments under expired Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)

- participated in planning for the upgrade of the Yarrabah Boardwalk with Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, QPWS and Queensland Indigenous Tourism Enterprise (QITE) including research regarding construction materials and costings
- participated in Warrungu and Mamu Native Title Determination celebrations and the launch of the Mungalla Station biodiversity project (Nywaigi)
- supported and participated in the Gimuy Fish and Food Festival highlighting issues of sustainability, Rainforest Aboriginal bio-cultural diversity and natural wealth
- engaged in quarterly face-to-face consultations with Traditional Owner representatives by attending at Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) Board meetings, regular consultations, and other forums; engagement was responsive and focussed on gathering and sharing information regarding projects and work in the World Heritage Area
- partnered separately with Giringun Aboriginal Corporation, Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation, and Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation to implement Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) agreements.

Traditional Owner small grants scheme

During 2013-14 the Authority provided small grants to Traditional Owner organisations totalling nearly \$30,000. Grants focussed on completing bio-cultural activities by Rainforest Aboriginal people that will benefit Wet Tropics World Heritage Area management. This program supported Traditional Owners to express or enhance their knowledge, culture and management practices through planning, management, monitoring and research on their traditional country. Successful recipients and their projects include:

- Gunggandji PBC: Cultural site recording and mapping at key Yarrabah sites
- Choorechillum Ngadjon PBC: Tourism opportunity partnership development in Ngadjon traditional country
- Mamu (Mullen Bun Goon Ltd): Identify, record and map significant carved trees with elders and youth in the South Johnstone area
- Mamu (Bagibarra Coastal Inc): Inter-generational cultural knowledge sharing between elders and school children using tactile methods and demonstrations
- Wanyur Majay (Bunna Binda): Cultural heritage information capture and recording with key elders
- Gunggandji (Yarrabah Arts Cultural Precinct): Cultural heritage boardwalk signage design and interpretation.

Support for Traditional Owner organisations

The Authority provided staff support and resources and training for a number of Traditional Owner organisations to increase their capacity to look after their traditional lands including:

- provided a grant to the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance (RAPA) to formalise a Partnership Agreement with the Authority detailing principles of the Authority's communication, engagement and commitments to an annual plan
- conducted a grant writing skills workshop with Traditional Owners from more than six tribal/clan groups.
- Assisted Traditional Owner organisations to prepare and/or partner grant applications for bio-cultural 'looking after country' projects including:
 - Gunggandji Aboriginal Corporation - Indigenous Sea Country Management Grants: Implement a Land and Sea Management Plan; mapping data; North Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Country Grants
 - Djunbunji Land and Sea Program (Mandingalbay Yidinji) - Indigenous Employment Program Funding; North Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Country Grants
 - Dawul Wuru Indigenous Corporation (Yirrganydji) - Indigenous Sea Country Management Grants; North Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Country Grants
 - Nywaigi Traditional Owners - Biodiversity Grant for Mungalla Station
- Assisted Traditional Owner organisations with on-ground projects including:
 - development of Gunggandji community-based land and sea management plan
 - provision of GIS data and interpretation to Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and involvement in their Land and Sea Country Plan implementation
 - provision of GIS data and interpretation to Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation (Jirrbal) and support and advice in tourism aspiration planning
 - provision of GIS information to Dawul Wuru (Yirrganydji) for country based management planning
 - provision of mapping for Mandingalbay Yidinji IPA consultative forum and GIS data for land claim; walking track planning; strategic plan implementation; participation in biodiversity survey
 - assistance in video development with Girringun Aboriginal Corporation for the 'Save the Cassowary' Campaign.

Improving wellbeing

The Authority engaged Rainforest Aboriginal people with current interests or aspirations to participate in the tourism industry in the Wet Tropics. As an economic sector, Aboriginal tourism differs markedly from mainstream tourism. While unique opportunities are evident, the challenges and obstacles, are complex and poorly understood by governments, the tourism industry and Traditional Owners themselves.

The Authority supported the participation of 10 Traditional Owners in Tour Guide Training at several separate Field Schools and Field Days across the Wet Tropics enabling them to gain skills and knowledge unique to the World Heritage Area. Collaborating with Girramay elders and Giringun Aboriginal Corporation, the Authority is also providing opportunity for Traditional Owners to play a leading role in designing and populating interpretative signage for the Kirrama Range.

As a partner to the National Environmental Research Program (NERP) Tropical Ecosystems Hub '*Indigenous Co-management and Biodiversity Protection*' project, the Authority participated in project Co-Research Team meetings and workshops. The overall goal of the project is to identify the means for effective recognition of Indigenous knowledge and co-management in the Wet Tropics region and deliver tested mechanisms for co-governance and collaboration between Traditional Owners, government managers, NRM, NGOs and other key partners for biodiversity and cultural conservation in the Wet Tropics region. The project will be complete in December 2014.

Native Title, Indigenous Land Use and other agreements

The Authority engaged in implementation arrangements for Native Title determinations and associated Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA). Reconciling its responsibility to appropriately balance World Heritage values with the well-being of Rainforest Aboriginal people, their cultural obligations to protect and manage lands and waters, and their aspirations for land use, community development and socio-economic recovery, in 2013-14 the Authority collaborated with:

- Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation, Djunbunji and other partners of the IPA Steering Committee to progress implementation of the IPA Management Plan and ex-ILUA arrangements
- Giringun Aboriginal Corporation and other partners of the Giringun Region IPA Committee to progress implementation of the IPA Management Plan
- Gunggandji PBC Aboriginal Corporation and other partners of the Independent Advisory Committee to progress implementation of the Land and Sea Country Plan.

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is used, enjoyed and celebrated as the World's finest learning landscape for tropical rainforest and its sustainable management

Accumulated knowledge about the values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and its governance and management represents a major asset. There is an opportunity to capitalise on this to contribute to the future management of the Wet Tropics and to other natural landscapes. While the knowledge generated and shared by formal research organisations is a key focus in these strategies, the knowledge held and shared by communities, including Rainforest Aboriginal people is also important.

Wet Tropics Learning Landscape

The Authority recognises that scientific research plays a critical role in providing the knowledge for evidence-based informed decision making and for the community to understand and appreciate the importance of the World Heritage Area. The Authority seeks to support continued research, to build on the legacy of past research investment and to ensure knowledge generated in the Wet Tropics is accessible to rainforest and protected area managers elsewhere. In order to support this, the Authority is promoting the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as an international 'learning landscape'. The Outstanding Universal Value of the Area, together with the favourable research environment found within the region, provides outstanding opportunities for collaborative research across a range of disciplines such as ecology, climatology, tourism, sociology and economics based on tropical ecosystems.

Some of the key objectives of the learning landscape project include:

- the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is recognised as a globally significant site for research into rainforest ecology, management and societies
- research investment is directed to research questions that are relevant to the management and policy needs of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
- research findings are presented and communicated in ways that maximise uptake and impact for management and policy
- knowledge from a wide variety of formal and informal sources is respected and shared for the benefit of the World Heritage Area and its communities
- land managers and communities are active participants in research and learning processes.

Over the past year, several workshops were held with the Scientific Advisory Committee to further refine and develop the learning landscape concept. There was an official public launch of the Authority's Learning Landscape initiative by the Vice Chancellor of James Cook University, Professor Sandra Harding on the 13 June 2014.

Learning Landscape promotional brochure and research prospectus

To coincide with the official launch of the Learning Landscape initiative, an eight page brochure was produced communicating why the Wet Tropics is an important place to invest in research, why the region is an attractive location to undertake research, why research is essential for informed management decisions and the type of research that the Authority considers important and would contribute to the better management of the World Heritage Area.

Student Research Grant Scheme

This was the third year that the Authority has offered a competitive small grants scheme to Australian post graduate students. Funding of up to \$4000 was made available for PhD and Masters research projects and up to \$1500 for Honours projects to support environmental, social and cultural research which will benefit Wet Tropics World Heritage Area management, policy development and operational decision making.

Many well-conceived projects, meeting the priorities identified in the *Wet Tropics Management Authority 2010-2014 Research Strategy* and demonstrating scientific rigour and innovative research were received. Eleven post-graduate students from three Australian universities were successful grant recipients. The students, their affiliated research institution and projects include:

- Kaylene Bransgrove, James Cook University: Drought, plant productivity and endophytes: Are they connected?
- Genevieve Buckton, James Cook University: Comparing water use strategies of lianas and trees in a lowland tropical rainforest
- Alice Buhrich, James Cook University: Homogeneity and heterogeneity of rainforest rock art
- Heather Haines, Griffith University: Linking climate and growth in tropical and subtropical Queensland
- Jeremy Little, James Cook University: Climate change implications for bushfire risk and vegetation types across a climatic gradient in the wet tropics of north-eastern Australia
- Rebecca McLean, Southern Cross University: An estimation of population, home range, sex ratios and relatedness of the Southern Cassowary (*Casuarus casuarinus johnsonii*) using faecal DNA, sign survey and camera traps in the Daintree lowlands and Cedar Bay
- Susan Nuske, James Cook University: Ecosystem services of mammalian fungal dispersers
- Claudia Pandolfo Paz, James Cook University: Mycorrhizae Community and Tree Response to Drought in a Tropical Rainforest
- Heather Robson, James Cook University: Utilising eDNA (environmental DNA) as a surveillance tool for the critically endangered armoured mist frog (*Litoria lorica*) in the Wet Tropics
- Amy Shima, James Cook University: Investigation and Monitoring of Health status of Lumholtz tree kangaroo with additional investigation comparing biomedical data of several species of tree kangaroo
- Tegan Whitehead, James Cook University: Population abundance, microhabitat resource use and ecology of the northern bettong *Bettongia tropica*.

Wet Tropics Research e-bulletin

The second edition of the Learning Landscape e-Bulletin was published on-line in February 2014. It included news that the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area was ranked the second most irreplaceable natural World Heritage site and the sixth overall in global irreplaceability in a new international analysis for the IUCN. It also highlighted the importance of long term research by celebrating the 50th anniversary of several rainforest research organisations.

In producing the research e-bulletin, the Authority also aims to clearly establish the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as an important centre for research synthesis and to establish the Authority as a valuable contributor to knowledge brokering. The purpose of the research e-bulletin is to promote science for management; help identify management issues and scientific solutions; emphasise application and relevance of research; and translate, interpret, synthesise and convey research findings to better inform decision making.

The research e-bulletin was distributed to over 1000 individuals, Commonwealth, state and local government bodies, managers of other Australian World Heritage properties, research organisations, conservation organisations and Indigenous organisations. Readership of the research e-bulletin extends into 12 countries.

National Environmental Research Program

The Australian Government's National Environmental Research Program (NERP) funds a portfolio of public good environmental research throughout Australia.

The NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub is focused on addressing issues of concern for the management, conservation and sustainable use of tropical rainforests including the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments, and the Torres Strait, through the generation and transfer of research and knowledge. The Authority was represented on the NERP TE Hub Steering Committee and also chairs, and is represented on, the NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub Rainforest Implementation Group.

The Authority was successful in obtaining funding from the NERP Program's Tropical Ecosystems Hub for a project to facilitate communication of rainforest research to the Queensland Government with the aim of maximising policy and management uptake.

The project involves organising forums in Brisbane and Cairns to brief relevant Queensland Government staff (policy and operational) of current Wet Tropics NERP rainforest research and its likely management implications. There are five partners involved in the project, all of whom are Tropical Ecosystems Hub program and/or project leaders as well as being members of the Authority's Scientific Advisory Committee. The aim of this project is to encourage high level Queensland Government support for managing current and emerging threats to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network

The Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN) is supported by the Australian Government through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy and the Super Science Initiative. TERN provides the research infrastructure and standardised procedures through which a wide array of ecosystem research data and knowledge can be stored, accessed and analysed.

TERN is establishing two Rainforest Super Sites in the Wet Tropics; one on the Atherton Tableland centred on a 25ha instrumented monitoring plot at Robson Creek; and one in the Daintree lowlands centred on James Cook University's (JCU) Daintree Rainforest Observatory. The Rainforest Super Sites are providing information on rainforest dynamics and in changes in biodiversity.

Running alongside the biodiversity monitoring has been the establishment of a biophysical monitoring program which includes automatic weather stations, soil moisture sensor systems and instrumented soil pits. A 40m tower with an OzFlux station constructed adjacent to the 25ha plant dynamics plot monitors energy, water and carbon balance. A Wet Tropics Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* approval were necessary to allow for the construction of the tower within the Area.

Authority staff attend regular meetings and field inspections to discuss research progress and project management issues. The Authority is also a member of the TERN Rainforest Supersite User Group which was established to discuss how to optimise the research relevance and data accessibility from the Robson Creek and Daintree Rainforest Observatory monitoring nodes.

Australian Research Council Linkage grant

In December 2011 the Authority entered into a three year partnership agreement with James Cook University, the Queensland Herbarium, the University of Queensland and Biome5 Pty Ltd in an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project: *Accelerating species richness gains and carbon sequestration in secondary regrowth in north Queensland*. The aim of the project is to devise strategies to accelerate rainforest recovery and regrowth on degraded land.

Many tropical rainforests are being cleared and subsequently abandoned. Secondary forests often regenerate in these abandoned sites but are a poor substitute for the original rainforest, lacking both their high species richness and exceptional carbon storage. This ARC Linkage project is investigating the barriers to rainforest regeneration with the aim of determining how to accelerate the restoration of these forests to increase their biological diversity and carbon sequestration.

The research sites are located on private land on the Atherton Tablelands and involve the cooperation and support of many landholders. The Authority's contribution to the project involves the allocation of staff time and access to digital spatial coverages and data sets. As of June 2014 this research project has resulted in nine published or prepared manuscripts, seven conference presentations and has supported and trained five post graduate students.

Tropical rainforest plant Identification courses

In partnership with the Authority and CSIRO Plant Industries, the Australian Tropical Herbarium (ATH) has developed a series of plant identification workshops that provide hands-on training to learn and develop skills in identifying the flora of the Wet Tropics. The workshops introduce participants to the skills and resources needed for rainforest plant identification; teach the use of interactive plant identification keys and are designed to improve participants understanding of identification, distribution and ecology of Wet Tropics native and invasive plant species. The workshops are based on the Interactive Key to Australian Tropical Rain Forest Plants (RFK) which is the largest interactive key in the world and covers 10% of the Australian vascular flora (over 2530 species).

Workshop materials were developed in a module format, to enable them to be presented 'stand-alone' or be combined with others on an as-needed basis. During 2013-14, 60 participants enrolled for either basic training (two days) or completed advance modules in plant identification techniques (four days), depending on their skill level and requirements. While targeting land managers in the World Heritage Area, workshops were also open to the public.

Launch of second edition of Repairing the Rainforest

Repairing the Rainforest was first published by the Authority in 1995. The updated edition provides a practical guide to rainforest restoration whilst also delving into the ecological principles upon which the practice is based. The book's focus is primarily on the Wet Tropics region and highlights key ecological principles for restoring rainforest biodiversity and function. These include, among others, the vital role of animal seed-dispersers in rainforests and the traits of plants that help or hinder their dispersal. The book has been made available as a free download from the Authority's website while the hardcopy version is available for purchase from several community tree planting organisations on the understanding that all funds will be directed into rainforest restoration projects undertaken by community groups in the Wet Tropics.

Geographic Information Services

The Authority provided geographic information services and products to a varied client base during the year. Clients included Commonwealth, State and local government departments, universities, research organisations, consulting companies, Traditional Owner groups and organisations, tourism organisations, community groups and individuals. The Authority also provides data management and mapping services in support of the yellow crazy ant eradication program.

World Heritage values are supported and presented through sustainable tourism

The Authority has made a strong contribution to support World Heritage presentation by encouraging, strengthening and engaging with the nature-based tourism industry. This aligns with the Queensland Government's efforts for the state to be Australia's leading tourism destination. Our key contribution has been to ensure the highest standards of presentation of the World Heritage Area and its natural and cultural values. The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and its management is an important part of the natural advantage that helps define the Queensland tourism experience. Sustainable tourism and ecotourism have featured strongly in our project activities. We are also guided by the World Heritage convention which requires us to protect and present this special landscape and to ensure it has a role in the life of the community.

The Queensland Ecotourism Plan, 2013-20 has a strategic goal 'embracing a partnership approach between tourism, government and Traditional Owners'. In our activities and projects this year, we worked closely with Tourism and Events Queensland, QPWS, local government, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) and many other partners to promote tourism and presentation. The Authority has taken a leadership role in facilitating networks such as the National Landscape Steering Committee, the Wet Tropics Guide Program and participating in the network of visitor centre managers for the Wet Tropics.

Regional agencies seek and expect the Authority to engage and cooperate on specific site management and for key entry points and visitor sites in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Authority has also supported practical initiatives in tourism presentation, marketing and promotion of key regional road networks, including the Great Green Way, the Bloomfield Track redevelopment and the re-opening of the Kirrama Range Road. This cooperation extended to major private sector partners including Skyrail through National Landscapes and the Kuranda Guide School, Daintree Discovery Centre and the Skywalk at Mamu, Ingan tours, Jungle Surfing in the Tourism Australia Best of Nature marketing initiative as well as forthcoming developments at the Cairns Aquarium and AQUIS with whom the Authority are working with to seek opportunities for Wet Tropics rainforest presentation and interpretation.

Wet Tropics Guides Program

The Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program is a stand out initiative. In 2013-14, the project received \$66,000 in TQUAL funding which ensures continued support for the next 18 months. The Wet Tropics guide program is delivered in partnership with Savannah Guides, and is a leading example of guide training aimed at improving presentation, increasing professional skills within the industry and enhancing visitor experience in the Area.

The Authority successfully conducted tour guide workshops in the Tully/Mission Beach area in December 2013 and at Kuranda on 4-5 April 2014. Attended by about 40 guides and tourism industry leaders, the Kuranda workshop was opened by Barron River MP, Michael Trout and Mareeba Mayor, Tom Gilmore.

The Tully/Mission Beach Guide training workshops attracted a high level of participation from Rainforest Aboriginal people and achieved a high level of cooperation with local indigenous owned tourism enterprises. This ensured local connection and a strong focus on the importance of Aboriginal culture, their stories and connection to tourism.

In this work the Authority is endeavouring to support guides in offering very high standards of presentation to assist visitor understanding of the World Heritage Area and to improve the international competitiveness of the Wet Tropics nature based tourism industry. The program is receiving national recognition as a means of ensuring high quality in the guiding industry.

Kirrama Range Road

The Cassowary Coast Regional Council received Queensland Government funding to support the re-opening of the Kirrama Range Road after a long period of closure (since prior to Cyclone Larry in 2006). The Authority has long advocated re-opening, recognising the tourism and presentation benefits of the road that links Cardwell to Mount Garnet, via Blencoe Falls. In addition to its function as a local access road, it also benefits research institutions who undertake ecological research in the area. Working in partnership with Cassowary Coast Regional Council and community groups, the Authority developed a range of signage and other information to help visitors learn about the interesting natural, cultural and historical features of the route, enriching visitor experience. It is intended that this will be installed to coincide with reopening of the road in 2014.

Bloomfield Track

Construction of a crossing at Woobadda Creek prompted Cairns Regional Council to prepare a road management plan for the Bloomfield Track. The plan confirms that the route will be managed as an adventure driving route, primarily suitable for four wheel drive use while also meeting local community needs. The plan also noted that despite its status as an important presentation road, information provision for road users is inadequate. The Authority has worked with local tourism operators and Douglas Shire Council to develop and implement a plan that will improve information and interpretive services, contributing to tourism outcomes for communities along the route. Douglas Council followed up on the initiative with the allocation of budget and staff resources to push ahead with this initiative in 2014. The Authority has given close attention to engaging with Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation to ensure that appropriate regard is given to cultural heritage values of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people.

National Landscapes program

The Authority has continued to play a leadership role in the National Landscapes program. Roles include chairing the steering committee and coordinating relationships with the national program managers and strengthening the regionally based network, which comprises local tourism and conservation groups. There were a number of achievements over the last year.

The National Landscapes Strategic Tourism Investment Grants (STIG) program has provided \$1M for developing National Landscapes Experience Development Strategies and implementation of priority projects. A share of this went to a number of Wet Tropics businesses to develop their experience offerings.

The Authority played a leading role in developing and testing the development of criteria for determining Australia's best nature based tourism experiences. Criteria have been defined to identify Signature Nature products across National Landscapes, with State tourism organisations, program partners and 16 landscapes engaged. Over 10 products were identified representing the best of the best in nature across the Wet Tropics.

The Wet Tropics National Landscapes *Wildiaries* Nature Series was also completed by Tourism Australia with support from the Authority. This included a collection three short nature films featuring wildlife and nature of the Wet Tropics landscapes.

The sixth annual National Landscapes Forum was held in Leura, New South Wales in the Greater Blue Mountains Landscape from 24-26 July 2013, 53 participants representing all 16 of Australia's National Landscapes, Australian and Queensland Governments as well as

key tourism agencies attended. A case study on the Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program was presented and embraced enthusiastically as an initiative which improves the conservation and tourism outcomes. The Wet Tropics also received the Outstanding Achievement award amongst all the National Landscapes for the year.

The Authority's efforts through the various tourism projects have also contributed to helping to strengthen the profile and sense of renewal of tourism across the Wet Tropics. This is particularly so in the Daintree, Tablelands and Cassowary Coast where we are working to help strengthen tourism presentation and tourism opportunities.

The Authority is also working across a number of Indigenous communities around Yarrabah, Wujal Wujal, and the Atherton Tablelands to support capacity development and tourism opportunities. This work may serve to promote the profile and new investment opportunities in Indigenous tourism products.

Enduring partnerships enhance the integrity of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, its presentation and its function in the life of the community

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is a small organisation with limited operational roles. It relies on the commitment and cooperation of its partners in government, the community and in industry to ensure that the goals of the World Heritage Convention are achieved in the Wet Tropics. Some of the most important partners for the Authority in its work are:

- *Land owners and managers within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.* Most prominent among these are the Queensland Department of National Parks, Recreation Sport and Racing (DNPRSR), which is responsible for the national parks, conservation reserves and other lands that comprise the bulk of the Area. Private land comprises a relatively small proportion of the Area, but the Authority is particularly conscious of the commitment of these owners whose land management practices benefit the entire community.
- *Local government.* The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area intersects with nine local government areas. Through sensitive design and management of transport, water and other council and community services infrastructure, sympathetic planning and regulation of development and leadership in matters such as pest control and community engagement, councils make a vital contribution to the Area.
- *Commonwealth and State environmental agencies.* Numerous Australian and Queensland government agencies contribute to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Prominent among these in the Queensland Government are the Departments of Environment and Heritage Protection; Natural Resources and Mines; Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; and Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. In the Commonwealth, the Departments of Environment, Heritage and Water; Resources, Energy and Tourism; and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry play particularly important roles.
- *Universities, research institutions and schools.* Through research and teaching, universities and schools build and communicate knowledge about the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. They play a central role in achieving the World Heritage Convention goal calling for the transmission of World Heritage properties to future generations. CSIRO, James Cook University and other universities have made a vital contribution through research over many years, ensuring that the Wet Tropics is strongly positioned as one of the World's premier learning landscapes for rainforest ecology and management.
- *Rainforest Aboriginal people.* The Rainforest Aboriginal tribes that recognise the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as their traditional country continue to have a vital interest and role in the protection and management of the landscape which lies at the centre of Rainforest Aboriginal culture.

- *The tourism industry.* The far north Queensland tourism industry and through this, a large proportion of the regional economy relies heavily on the globally significant natural values of the Wet Tropics rainforests. In turn, the tourism industry is a vital partner in presenting the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to millions of visitors and communicating its values.
- *Regional community organisations.* Many community organisations in the region play an important role in support of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. These include Terrain NRM, the regional natural resources management body; numerous catchment coordination groups; regional and local scale catchment management and landcare groups; and community conservation organisations. Recreation, arts and cultural organisations are also important partners for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The Authority's partnerships are evident in almost all elements of its work so feature in other parts of this annual report. Partnership activities that are not otherwise reported are summarised below.

Regional Managers Coordination Network

The Authority is an active participant in the Far North Queensland Regional Managers Coordination Network. This network, comprising senior public sector leaders in Australian, Queensland and local government in the region plays an important role in supporting collaboration between government agencies by sharing information relevant to implementation of government programs.

Australian Committee for IUCN

The Authority is a government agency member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Along with other Australian IUCN members, the Authority participates in the Australian National Committee for IUCN (ACIUCN), serving on its executive committee.

ACIUCN plays a valuable networking and information sharing role between government and non-government members of IUCN in Australia.

Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

Through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (DNPRSR) is responsible for the national parks, conservation reserve and others areas of public land that total around 80% of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area making it a vitally important partner for the Authority.

In 2013-14, the Authority provided DNPRSR with \$1.8M of Queensland State Government funding that had been appropriated for World Heritage management purposes. This arrangement helps to ensure DNPRSR is able to address any particular priorities of the Authority in relation to the World Heritage status of the Wet Tropics landscape.

Machinery of Government changes implemented following the change of Queensland Government in 2012 required consideration of the nature of the partnership now that the Authority and QPWS are in different portfolios. Consistent with other inter-agency funding transfer arrangements, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was developed to support the previously established partnership agreement. DNPRSR and the Authority agreed that:

1. The purpose of the MoU is to identify and fund protected area management services to be delivered by DNPRSR in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area that contribute to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
2. DNPRSR and the Authority will collaborate in the development of a MoU for 2013-14 that is consistent with the above purpose and conforms with the *Management Scheme Intergovernmental Agreement for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*.

The Authority continues to work with DNPRSR to ensure its operational functions are appropriately aligned to the World Heritage priorities of the Area, as determined by the Authority.

Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee

The Authority collaborated with other Australian World Heritage properties through the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC). AWHAC advises the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment on policies, programs and appropriate cultural protocols which benefit World Heritage properties in areas of common interest and on national or crosscutting issues. In addition to the opportunity to contribute to national policy for World Heritage, the Authority's participation in AWHAC helps increase capacity in the Wet Tropics and elsewhere by information sharing. During 2013-14 the Authority played a leading role in support of the development of AWHAC advice on research needs for World Heritage.

Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network

Wet Tropics Traditional Owners participate in the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network (AWHIN) that assists in ensuring Traditional Owners associated with World Heritage properties have a proper influence in national management and policy. The Authority assisted the secretariat of AWHIN within the Department of Environment and Wet Tropics AWHIN representatives with advice and information as required.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is an accountable and capable organisation

This goal aims to ensure the Authority maintains and develops its own capacity and continues to adapt to the priorities of the Australian and Queensland Governments and the Wet Tropics community. Through this approach, the Authority creates a link between the goals of the World Heritage Convention and the day to day activities of its staff.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority continued to pursue high standards of business planning to ensure resources are allocated to the strategic priorities established by the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board, through the 2013-18 Strategic Plan, and that progress is regularly monitored.

World Heritage funding

In late 2013, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, The Honourable Greg Hunt MP, demonstrated the Australian government's continuing support for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the role of the Authority through the provision of a \$13.4M World Heritage grant over five years 2013-18. This funding will enable the Authority to continue building partnerships that conserve, present and support the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and bring benefits to the tourism industry, Traditional Owners, land managers, researchers and the wider community.

New investments and funding proposals

The Authority continued to seek new funding into projects that contribute to its strategic goals. During 2013-14, the Authority secured the following additional new investments:

- \$1.9M (over five years) from the Australian Government to eradicate yellow crazy ant infestations that threaten the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Key activities include a baiting program, and a targeted community engagement and education program. The knowledge and expertise gained during the project will allow for adaptive management as well as improve capacity to respond to any future yellow crazy ant infestations, not only in the Wet Tropics region, but also in other tropical forests
- \$66,000 (in partnership with Savannah Guides Ltd) to deliver Wet Tropics Tour guide training, which aims to improve presentation of the Area, increase professional skills within the industry and enhance visitor experience in the Area
- \$32,557 from the NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub for a project to facilitate communication of rainforest research to the Queensland government agencies with the aim of maximising policy and management uptake.

Queensland Terrestrial World Heritage Review

In February 2014, The Honourable Andrew Powell MP, Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection announced a review of management arrangements for Queensland's terrestrial World Heritage properties, including the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. In announcing the review, the Minister said that, "what is required is a more consistent model of management where we improve, simplify and maximise the protection of the state's World Heritage areas." In late March 2014, a delegation of directors and representatives of advisory committees from the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area joined their counterparts from the Australia Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh), Fraser Island and the Gondwana Rainforest

of Australia properties for a workshop, organised by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to discuss issues and options for change.

International links

As a World Heritage Area, the Wet Tropics has an international profile. The Authority was pleased to host a number of international visitors seeking to learn about the values of the World Heritage Area and its system of management. Through this, the Authority contributes to strengthening global capacity for World Heritage management and helps Australia's and Queensland's reputation in support of the World Heritage Convention. The Authority also welcomes the opportunity to learn from the experience of visitors.

The Authority's contribution is often in support of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Creating linkages with other environment and heritage managers in Asia and the Pacific also represents a contribution the Authority can make to Queensland's objective of sharing tropical expertise.

As an example, in August 2013 the Authority hosted a delegation of officials from the Paraguay Environmental Conservation Australian Leadership Awards Fellowships Programme to discuss World Heritage management issues. Authority staff were pleased to share their experiences in relation to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and to learn of the approach Paraguay is taking to establish tactical measures to effectively engage communities in developing a strategy for integrating environmental conservation and sustainable development.

Submissions

Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2013-2020

The Authority made a submission on the draft *Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2013-2020*. The Plan sought to provide tourism operators, government and other stakeholders with clear direction on how Queensland will leverage its competitive advantage to become a bold, innovative, world leader in ecotourism. The Authority's submission highlighted its activities in relation to eco-tourism in the Wet Tropics and identified opportunities for further development of the industry.

Draft Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment

The Authority provided detailed comments on the draft Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment, focussing in particular on the case study on the management system for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and its contribution to reef protection.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

In February 2014, the Authority prepared a submission to the Australian Parliament's Northern Australian Committee inquiry into the development of Northern Australia. The Committee considered policies for developing the parts of Australia which lie north of the Tropic of Capricorn, spanning Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland.

The Authority's submission provided a brief list of issues that the Authority recommended be considered in developing recommendations to parliament, focussed around World Heritage, valuing national assets and sustaining cultural landscapes.

In April 2014, the executive director was invited to appear as a witness at the Committee's public hearing in

Cairns. This provided an opportunity for Authority to highlight the importance of the eco-tourism in the region; meaningful indigenous participation; the critical need for water planning and conservation across the various landscapes and building on tropical expertise and knowledge. The submission also stressed the fact that there are serious pest, weed and disease risks affecting the natural values of northern Australia that need attention, through a combination of preventative measures, early detection as well as rapid responses to incursions.

Queensland Government

Environmental Offsets Framework

The Authority provided comment on the Queensland Government Environmental offsets Framework discussion paper, in particular, on issues which may have implications in relation to protection and management of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Area under the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*, and the application of the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*.

Australian Heritage Strategy

The Authority prepared a submission on the draft Australian Heritage Strategy in June 2014. The submission highlighted the need for the Australian Government to play a continuing and active leadership role in relation to World Heritage and National Heritage places. This included policy, planning and regulation in national and international contexts; ensuring effective governance systems are established; ensuring establishment and effective implementation of national coordination of heritage management systems; identifying, listing and promoting heritage places; ensuring that appropriate expertise is available to support heritage conservation and management, and support for World and National heritage place management through provision of adequate funding.

Business Administration

Business planning systems

The Authority gives a high priority to developing a business plan that creates the highest possible value for the Wet Tropics community and stakeholders. The Authority is committed to developing and adapting its own capabilities to ensure it maintains capacity to meet the needs of the Australian and Queensland Governments and the Wet Tropics community. The Authority's project management approach encourages clear identification of outcomes, objectives and milestones. It requires purposeful allocation of staff and other resources to organisational priorities and establishes a clear basis for organisational performance management.

Financial management

As the Authority is a Statutory Authority, its general-purpose financial statements details for 2013-2014 are incorporated in the overall Department of Environment and Heritage Protection financial statements. Total funding of \$5M for 2013-2014 was provided to the Authority, principally by the Australian and Queensland Governments, and supplemented by other external investment. The Authority realised an operating surplus of \$284,000. A summary of the Authority's operating statement for 2013-2014 is provided in **Table 1**.

The Australian Government's allocation to the Authority for 2013 -14 was \$3M. These funds were allocated to the Authority's programs. The Queensland Government, through the Department of Environment and Heritage contributed \$1.8M to the Authority to support management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. These funds were then allocated to the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing for on-ground and field management services.

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Table 1: WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OPERATING STATEMENT

Controlled Revenue and Expenses	Notes	2013-14	2012-13
REVENUE		\$'000	\$'000
Revenue from Government			
Payments for outputs		1,922	1,796
Asset assumed/liabilities transferred	1	232	0
Sub-total Government Revenue		2,154	1,796
Own Source Revenue			
User charges			6
Grants and other contributions		3,083	3,173
Taxes fees and fines			
Gain on disposal of fixed assets			
Other revenue			
Interest			
Sub-total own source revenue		3,083	3,179
TOTAL REVENUE		5,237	4,975
EXPENSES		\$'000	\$'000
Operating Expenses			
Organisational units			
BBA Business Management	2	4,834	2,517
BBB Communities and Partnerships			267
BBC Planning and Conservation			723
BBD QPWS - WTMA Partnership Agreement			1,792
Sub-total operating expenses		4,834	5,299
Non-Operating Expenses			
Depreciation	3	119	4
Asset write-downs/Loss on disposal			
Sub-total Non-operating expenses		119	4
TOTAL EXPENSES		4,953	5,303
OPERATING RESULT		284	-328

Notes:

- 1 The goods received below fair value transaction relates to the office fit out provided at no cost to the Wet Tropics Management Authority for new accommodation in Cairns, this is a non-cash expense.
- 2 The Authority previously reported by 4 Organisational units. We now report by one organisational unit BBA which allocates budgets to goals within 4 programs.
- 3 The increase in depreciation predominantly relates to the office fit out described in note 1. This is a non-cash expense.

Audits

Three operational audits were conducted by PGL Financial Services Pty Ltd in 2013-2014 for Commonwealth Funds received.

Overseas travel

There were no overseas trips by Authority staff during 2013-2014.

Staffing and contractors

At 30 June 2014, the approved staff establishment of the Authority totalled 22 permanent positions of which three were vacant and 2 temporary positions of which one was vacant.

Contract staff supplemented staff resources during the year to provide a range of services. These services included Information Technology, conservation, tourism activities and administrative support. **Table 2** shows expenditure on consultancies and contractors for 2013-2014 compared to the previous financial year.

Workplace health and safety

The Authority adheres to the Queensland Government's health and safety management systems and procedures. The Authority recorded no accidents for 2013-14. Regular workplace health and safety inspections are conducted with no significant issues arising. Authority staff attended regular education, awareness and training sessions to ensure current accreditations are maintained. All field and office based staff received training that is mandatory or required to meet their legislative requirements.

Staff training and professional development

The Authority is committed to developing the capability of its employees and recognises that training and development is critical for delivering government priorities, objectives, and outcomes; developing high performing teams and the attraction and retention of employees. In 2013-14 the Authority developed a training and professional plan for all staff, allocating \$40,000 to implement. All training needs were identified through individual Performance and Development Plans.

Table 2: EXPENDITURE ON CONTRACTS

	2013-2014	2012-2013
EXPENDITURE	\$	\$
Consultancies by Category *		
Management	0	0
TOTAL	0	0
Contract staff by Program*		
Business Management	9622	10,095
Communities and Partnerships	32,102	61,117
Planning and Conservation	0	5942
Landscape Connectivity	0	96,227
Tramp Ants Wet Tropics	0	233,000
TOTAL	41,724	406,381

* Excludes DNPRSR expenses incurred against the annual QPWS/Wet Tropics Management Authority Partnership Agreement.

Equal employment opportunity

All recruitment and selection recommendations are monitored and reviewed to ensure compliance with Queensland Government policies and procedures including current human resources directives. All appointments during 2013-2014 complied with directives and no equal employment opportunity complaints were received. At 30 June 2014 the Authority had 12 females and 8 males on staff and 4 positions vacant. **Table 3** gives a profile of the Authority's staff.

Wet Tropics volunteers and internships

The Authority recognises that volunteers make a valuable contribution to the organisation and as such, is committed to planned, supported and appropriately managed volunteer arrangements. During 2013-14 the Authority hosted four graduate placements via formal arrangements through the Aurora (Native Title Internship) Program, and one Masters student through James Cook University's Professional Placement program. The Authority is pleased to continue to provide support for a regular work experience opportunity through ARC Disability Services. This placement enables people with a disability to actively participate in the workplace.

Table 3: EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER, OCCUPATIONAL STREAM AND SALARY

Employment by gender and occupational stream as at 30 June 2014 (based on actual occupants)

STREAM	Female (%)	Male (%)
Administration and Senior Executive Service	11 (55)	4 (20)
Professional	1 (5)	3 (15)
Technical	0	1 (5)
Operational	0	0
TOTAL	12 (60)	8 (40)

Employment by gender and salary level as at 30 June 2014 (based on substantive positions)

SALARY RANGE	Female (%)	Male (%)
\$179,433 +		1 (5)
\$103,846 - \$109,831		2 (10)
\$93,728 - \$100,504		1 (5)
\$83,765 - \$89,619	2 (10)	3 (15)
\$73,006 - \$79,353	5 (25)	1 (5)
\$62,998 - \$69,272	3 (15)	
\$53,280 - \$59,411	2 (15)	
TOTAL	12 (60)	8 (40)

Terms and Abbreviations

AC	Companion of the Order of Australia
ARC	Australian Research Council
ATE	Australian Tourism Exchange
ATH	Australian Tropical Herbarium
AWHAC	Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee
AWHIN	Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network
CBD	Central Business District
CCC	Community Consultative Committee
CFOC	Caring for our Country
Cr	Councillor
CVA	Conservation Volunteers
CMA	Cooperative Management Agreement
Commonwealth Act	<i>Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act 1994</i>
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific, Industry and Research Organisation
CSLG	Conservation Sector Liaison Group
DNPRSR	Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
EHP	Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (Queensland)
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
GCL	Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu
GIS	Geographic Information System
ha	Hectare
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JCU	James Cook University
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NERP	National Environment Research Program
NiE	News in Education
NGO	Non-government organisation
NQ	North Queensland
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTRB	Native Title Representative Bodies
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
QITE	Queensland Indigenous Tourism Enterprise
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
QTIC	Queensland Tourism Industry Council
Queensland Act	<i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i>
RAPA	Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance
RFK	Interactive Key to Australian Tropical Rain Forest Plants

RNTBC	Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate
SAC	Scientific Advisory Committee
STIG	Strategic Tourism Investment Grants
TERN	Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network
The Area	Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area
The Authority	Wet Tropics Management Authority
The Plan	<i>Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998</i>
TREAT	Trees for Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands
TQUAL	Tourism Quality (grants program)
TTNQ	Tourism Tropical North Queensland
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
Warrama	Corroborees involving a number of tribes
WHA	World Heritage Area
WTMA	Wet Tropics Management Authority



Mesophyll rainforest, Hull River floodplain © Dan Metcalfe



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