



Communiqué
Board Meeting No 94
8 December 2015

On 8 December, the newly appointed board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority convened for their first meeting. This followed a commitment by the Queensland and Australian governments to review the Authority's board arrangements.

Four new directors were approved for the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Ms Leah Talbot, Ms Anne Clarke, Mr John Courtenay and Professor Iain Gordon were appointed and they join Ms Leslie Shirreffs who was appointed chair in September and Scott Buchanan who was recruited as executive director in December 2015.

One further board member, its second indigenous member, will be appointed early in 2016.

Joining the chair and directors were representatives from Queensland and Australian Government environment departments.

While the focus of the meeting was on induction and familiarisation for the new board, there was also enthusiastic discussion about some key strategic issues and directions. In particular, the board were briefed on the Authority's previous and current relationships and engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal people and were keen to ensure that Wet Tropics Rainforest Aboriginal people were supported in expressing their knowledge, culture and management practices on country. The board requested that the Authority seek opportunities that promote collaboration and meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

There was lively discussion on the amendments to the Wet Tropics Management Plan which regulates activities that have the potential to impact the values of the World Heritage Area. Directors felt strongly that amendments consulted on in 2009 and 2012 could not proceed without re-engaging with the community and that, given the Plan was up for a ten year review in 2018, a proper consultation on a full review be commenced in the next 12 months.

The board was updated on yellow crazy ants and their impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Area, and agreed to work with the Authority to ensure funding for eradication program is achieved. The board commended the work undertaken to date, particularly the community volunteers. Concern was expressed about the economic impacts of yellow crazy ants on agriculture, tourism and lifestyle if the eradication program currently underway failed to achieve ongoing resourcing. The board also expressed concerns about the potential impact on the listing of the World Heritage Area if left untreated.

Directors acknowledged the significant contributions of the outgoing board and the work of the Authority in protecting, presenting and managing the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The board intends to meet on a quarterly basis in 2016, with the next board meeting scheduled for February 2016.

Board members are:

- Ms Leslie Shirreffs, who as chair of the board brings to the position 22 years' experience in world heritage management, biodiversity, conservation, vegetation management, land planning and wildlife conservation.
- Mr John Courtenay, who is a tourism consultant with more than 40 years' experience in developing tourism, particularly in far north Queensland. Mr Courtenay was involved in the formation of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the development of the Wet Tropics Plan.
- Ms Leah Talbot, who is a Kuku Yalanji woman from the Bloomfield River area in the northern end of the World Heritage Area. Ms Talbot is a CSIRO researcher, and has worked with Indigenous community organisations in the areas of native title, cultural heritage, protection of significant cultural sites, oral and community history, and natural and cultural resource management. Ms Talbot has previously served as a Director on the Board.
- Professor Iain Gordon, who is internationally recognised for his scientific excellence and leadership in environmental research. Professor Gordon has more than 30 years' research experience in agriculture/environment issues across a range of continents.
- Ms Anne Clarke, who has worked in natural resource management including coastal stream and wetland restoration and fisheries habitat protection. Ms Clarke's position as Regional Manager (North), Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries included responsibility for the delivery of programs relating to fishing, tourism, engineering and environmental control.
- Mr Scott Buchanan, who was recruited as executive director and brings diverse experience in strategic policy, planning and service delivery and a proven record in engaging with communities to deliver significant organisational outcomes, in particular in building enduring relationships with Traditional Owners. He has extensive experience in managing large teams, major projects and programs across the water, vegetation and biodiversity areas and in developing and implementing complex, high profile policy and legislation, including world heritage policy.