

WET TROPICS COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 16 November 1972. The World Heritage Convention came into force in 1975. The World Heritage Convention promotes cooperation among nations, in order to identify and protect heritage that is of Outstanding Universal Value and ensure its conservation for current and future generations Australia ratified the Convention in August 1974.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1998. The Wet Tropics stretches along the northeast coast of Australia for some 450km. Encompassing 894,420 hectares of mostly tropical rainforest, this stunningly beautiful area is extremely important for its rich and unique biodiversity. It also presents an unparalleled record of the ecological and evolutionary processes that shaped the flora and fauna of Australia, containing the relicts of the great Gondwanan forest that covered Australia and part of Antarctica 50 to 100 million years ago. All of Australia’s unique marsupials and most of its other animals originated in rainforest ecosystems, and their closest surviving relatives occur in the Wet Tropics. These living relicts of the Gondwanan era and their subsequent diversification provide unique insights to the process of evolution in general. They also provide important information for the interpretation of fossils of plants and animals found elsewhere in Australia, and about the evolution of Australia’s sclerophyll flora and marsupial fauna in particular.

Under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Act), the Wet Tropics Management Authority is established to ensure that Australia’s obligation under the World Heritage Convention is met in relation to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (the Area). Australia’s obligation is to protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations the Area. Approximately 80% of the Area is now national park tenure with day-to-day management being provided by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. 37% of the Area has been recognised as Native Title determined with another 24% currently under application for Native Title.

The Authority comprises of a board of seven directors and approximately 20 staff. The Wet Tropics Board is responsible for the way the Authority performs its functions and exercises its powers. It is also the role of the Board to decide objectives, strategies and policies to be followed by the Authority. The Authority’s strategic goals are espoused in its [Strategic Plan 2013—2018](#). The Board has recently outlined its [key priorities for 2015—2018](#) in line with the Strategic Plan.

Under the Act, the Authority is required to establish two statutory committees: a community consultative committee and a scientific advisory committee.

2. Purpose of the Wet Tropics Community Consultative Committee

As outlined under Schedule 1 of the Act, the Authority is required to ensure the Community Consultative Committee (the Committee) is broadly representative of the community and able to channel information and opinion effectively between the community and the Board, and that Aboriginal interest are adequately represented on the Committee.

The function of the Committee is to advise the Authority's Board on the views of the community on the Authority's policies and programs in relation to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. In addition, the Community Consultative Committee disseminates information provided at Committee meetings on matters concerning:

- the views of the various communities of interest to management objectives, plans, policies and actions undertaken by the Authority
- provision of essential services to communities within and adjacent to the Area
- provision for acceptable use of the Area compatible with maintaining World Heritage values and integrity
- the relationship of non-government agencies to the Authority.

Members of the Community Consultative Committee will seek and report on the views of communities within their area of interest on relevant issues and are expected to advance these views to the best of their ability and knowledge.

In addition to the above functions, the Board is looking to the Committee to offer cross sectoral views about issues, problems and challenges facing World Heritage management, protection and presentation and to work cooperatively together and with the Board to promote good management. Through cross sectoral discussion and collaboration the Committee will contribute to creative and innovative solutions to complex management and presentation challenges while ensuring that World Heritage Convention obligations are met.

3. Membership

Membership of the committee is on a voluntary basis and primarily reflects broad sectors of community interest relevant to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The Committee will be Chaired by a member of the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board and include approximately 12 representatives with interests in any of the following sectors: Rainforest Aboriginal people, community conservation, environmental advocates, recreation, tourism, marketing, local government, education and training, youth, World Heritage landholders and neighbours, and agriculture.

The Authority encourages representation from a broad geographic range across the Wet Tropics.

Members will be knowledgeable of the issues relevant to their area of interest/sector of representation and thus be able to provide informed advice both in and outside of formal meetings. Discussions outside of meetings may occur through use of various forms of media including social media.

Observers

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) and Terrain NRM will be invited as observers to Committee meetings and will provide advice and information where requested. Other Board directors, officers from the Authority, guests and specialist advisers may be invited by the Chair to attend and to provide advice.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Board responsibilities:

- Appoint a Chair for the Committee

- Providing direction to the Committee on matters for which it is seeking the views of the community.
- Providing feedback to the Committee regarding advice provided by the Committee to the Board.

Committee Chair responsibilities:

- Preside at all meetings at which he/she is present in accordance with formal meeting protocols.
- Liaise with the Authority's secretariat as required to develop agendas and approve meeting minutes.
- Facilitate discussion on the agenda items, seeking consensus on issues and developing recommendations to provide to the Board.
- Facilitate participation of all Committee members in the meeting and encourage members to share and exchange information with each other and the Authority.
- Present the Committee's advice/recommendations, including unanimous, majority and/or divergent views on discussion topics.
- Speak publicly on behalf of the Committee.
- Maintain adherence to the code of conduct at meetings.
- Maintain dialogue with the Authority and Committee members about ongoing and relevant issues in-between meetings to support progress of actions from meetings.

Member responsibilities:

- Attend and participate in committee meetings and ongoing deliberations.
- Direct their expertise and experience towards:
 - advancing the views of their respective sector or community interest and debating and formulating a view on issues brought before the Committee and making appropriate recommendations
 - providing meetings with an up-to-date analysis of their sector and opportunities available for the Authority and members to work collaboratively
 - providing up to date advice at meetings when requested on issues identified on the agenda.
- Consult with other experts, industry and stakeholders and encourage wider knowledge about Wet Tropics World Heritage issues (subject to any overriding confidentiality and media provisions under these terms of reference).
- Work cooperatively and endeavour to reach a consensus view on issues discussed where possible.
- Participate in working groups as agreed.
- Follow up on committee actions as per the minutes.
- Behave in a professional manner and maintain confidentiality on identified sensitive issues.

Secretariat responsibilities:

- Organising meetings
- Ensuring an appropriate level of administrative support
- Dissemination of information to members

- Providing background information considered reasonably necessary to assist members in their deliberations.
- Preparing and distributing minutes of meetings.

5. Appointment of the Committee Chair

The chair of the Committee will be a Board director appointed by the Chair of the Board.

6. Appointment of members

Appointment to the Committee will be by invitation of the Board following a call for expressions of interest.

Consideration will be given to equity issues with the Committee.

7. Term of appointment

The term of the Committee shall be for a three year period commencing on the convening of the first committee meeting for the term. Committee members may be appointed for a maximum of two consecutive terms. Following a break of at least one term, previous members may be eligible for reappointment.

Members may resign at any time in writing to the Chair of the Board. Vacancies may be filled by invitation for a period to coincide with the Committee term, seeking to maintain the general composition of the Committee.

The Board will be mindful of the Committee's corporate memory and will give consideration to ensuring some continuity of membership between the outgoing and incoming committees.

8. Meeting attendance and time commitments

As membership of the Committee is on an honorary basis, the Authority is appreciative of time commitments made by members. Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that members will attach a priority to attending and participating at Committee meetings. It is also expected that members will allocate appropriate preparation time for reading of agenda papers and responding to issues where the Committee's advice is sought. Costs of attendance will be reimbursed in accordance with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's procedures outlined in *Remuneration of Part-time Chairs and Members of Government Boards, Committees and Statutory Authorities (2010)*

Where members are unable to attend meetings due to long absences the Board will select an interim replacement of that member.

9. Termination

The Board reserves the right to terminate an individual's membership of the Committee at any time subject to procedural fairness. A termination notice must be in writing from the Chair of the Board.

The Chair of the Board may consider terminating a membership of the Committee if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without a valid reason.

10. Meeting location and frequency

Meetings will normally be held in Cairns. However, the Committee may meet in other Wet Tropics locations, particularly when there is an opportunity to inspect particular sites/issues of interest.

The Committee will meet at least two times per year and at other times as deemed necessary.

The Chair may agree to use contemporary communication technologies to hold meetings where this is deemed practical and efficient. Matters decided at these meetings must be noted by the Committee at the next formal meeting and be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.