



Joint board meeting of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Terrain NRM

20 August 2019

Communiqué

The boards of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Terrain NRM held a joint meeting in Cairns on 20 August 2019. This was the second time the boards had met, and reflects the collaborative work between both organisations to deliver on shared activities and interests; including support for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' aspirations, pest management, and integrated landscape management. These achievements have been enabled by the strong working relationships both organisations maintain with their partners and the broader wet tropics community.

As manager of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the Authority has an obligation to protect, conserve, present, rehabilitate and transmit the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area to future generations. The Authority is responsible to both the Australian and Queensland governments, and work together with the traditional owners of the land, industries and communities who live and work in the Wet Tropics region.

Terrain NRM works with the entire wet tropics community to promote sustainable use of land and waterways, protect environmental values and support healthy, productive and viable communities and sustainable industries. Although they are one of 50+ NRM regional bodies across Australia, Terrain is truly unique in working across two internationally recognised landscapes – the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Both boards recognise the challenge in responding to impacts beyond their direct control like climate change, but agreed that formal collaboration between the two bodies has already brought increased protection of our region's natural and cultural resources and improved broader landscape management outcomes. The boards reaffirmed their collaborative approach to land restoration and threatened species recovery as well as ensuring a rights-based approach with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, and enhanced and meaningful participation in land management across the wet tropics.

To meet these challenges, the boards committed to continue to proactively align skills, connections, knowledge and resources to deliver common land management and community objectives based on the following tenets:

- recognition of existing proactive and practical approaches to climate action while embracing transformative or 'out of the box' adaptation pathways without losing focus on emissions reduction
- the need for a whole-of-region approach to bring together collaborators, including the next generation of (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) leaders to tackle climate change and advance the participation of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples in the wet tropics
- seeking opportunities for collaborative projects that build natural capital and landscape resilience
- the need to empower Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' for increased well-being and opportunities that enable them to derive economic and social benefit from their country
- the need to recognise and respect Aboriginal traditional knowledge and systems in finding solutions to existing changes
- a rights-based approach to world heritage management in the wet topics, including recognising Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' rights and roles in management of the World Heritage Area and supporting culturally appropriate engagement protocols through the use of free, prior and informed consent.

The Authority has also signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Terrain NRM to continue supporting the Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The TOLG are leading the drafting and consultation of the refresh of the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement*, signed in 2005 by 18 rainforest Aboriginal groups, the Authority, and the Australian and Queensland governments. The *Regional Agreement* recognises the significant contribution that Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples make to the management of cultural and natural heritage values and commits all parties to mechanisms for cooperative management of the world heritage area.

The leadership teams at Terrain NRM and the Authority have committed to continue the dialogue and pursue collaborative projects. Their next step will be to enhance awareness of challenges and opportunities facing the region with key stakeholders regionally and nationally.

Background information

The [Wet Tropics Management Authority](#) is established under State and Commonwealth legislation. The overarching role of the Authority is to ensure that Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention to protect and present the outstanding universal value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is met. The Authority is acknowledged as a global leader in world heritage management and has led a number of statewide, national and international initiatives.

Chair – Ms Leslie Shirreffs PSM

Executive Director – Mr Scott Buchanan

[Terrain NRM](#) is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that supports natural resource management (NRM) in the wet tropics region. It builds partnerships to secure the health of our natural resources including the region's water, biodiversity, soil, climate and community assets. This work is guided by the *Wet Tropics Plan for People and Country*. Its other important role is to provide planning direction, information, advice and practical support to community groups and organisations with an interest in NRM.

Chair – Dr Keith Noble FAICD

Chief Executive Officer – Ms Carole Sweatman

The Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) was formed to progress the refresh of the [Wet Tropics Regional Agreement](#) under the direction of the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples. In progressing this work, the TOLG are working with the Authority, the North Queensland Land Council, Terrain NRM, and State and Commonwealth government agencies.