



Wet Tropics of Queensland

Final minutes

Board Meeting No. 94

8 December 2015

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leslie Shirreffs", written over a horizontal line.

Leslie Shirreffs, Chair Wet Tropics Management Authority

- Approved**
- Not approved**

1. ATTENDANCE

- Directors**
- Ms Leslie Shirreffs (Chair)
 - Ms Anne Clarke
 - Mr John Courtenay
 - Prof Iain Gordon
 - Ms Leah Talbot
 - Mr Scott Buchanan, Executive Director
- Official observers**
- Ms Veronica Blazely, Director, Natural Heritage Section Department of the Environment (by phone for items 2.1-2.4)
 - Mr Cameron Hook , Natural Heritage Section Department of the Environment (by phone for items 2.1-2.4)
 - Mr Jason Jacobi, Executive Director, Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (NPSR)
 - Mr Nick Weinert, Director , Strategic Environmental Programs, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
- WTMA officers**
- Mr Terry Carmichael, Principal Project Officer (item 4.6)
 - Dr Paul Chantrill, Manager, Communities, Aboriginal Partnerships and Tourism
 - Mr Max Chappell, Manager, Planning and Conservation
 - Dr Steve Goosem, Senior Principal Scientist (item 4.6)
 - Mr Gareth Humphries, Senior Technical Officer (item4.5)
 - Ms Lucy Karger, Senior Project Officer (item 4.5)
 - Mrs Rebecca Lagerroth, Manager, Aboriginal Partnerships (item 4.1 and 4.2)
 - Ms Patricia O’Loghlen, Principal Project Officer (item 4.1 and 4.2)
 - Ms Ellen Weber, Executive Officer

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Chairperson’s welcome

The Chair Leslie Shirreffs opened the meeting at 9.25am and acknowledged the Gimuy Walaburra Yidinji and the Yirrganydji Traditional Owners of the Cairns Area.

The Chair acknowledged the Rainforest Aboriginal people, and the Elders past and present of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The Chair welcomed Directors Ms Anne Clarke, Mr John Courtenay, Prof Iain Gordon and Ms Leah Talbot to the meeting.

The Chair welcomed the government department representatives to the meeting.

2.2 Apologies

Apologies were received from representatives from the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, who were unable to attend the meeting.

Apologies were received from representatives from the Department of the Environment for not being able to participate in person. Veronica Blazely advised that an officer would likely attend the next meeting.

2.3 Chair introduction

The Chair provided a verbal report to the Board and noted the following matters, including that she:

- was pleased that the board has been re-established, and for the privilege to be appointed Chair
- congratulated Scott Buchanan on being successfully recruited to the role of Executive Director
- was hopeful that the second indigenous director would be appointed by Queensland Governor in Council early in 2016
- acknowledged the outgoing Chair and Directors for their contributions to the Authority and to the management of the World Heritage Area
- noted the key challenges for the board during its tenure including the participation of the Rainforest peoples in the World Heritage Area (WHA) to ensure benefits are derived from its listing, the cultural heritage listing of the WHA through free, prior informed consent of the Rainforest peoples, protection and presentation of the area through strong working relationships with the tourism industry, threatening processes such as yellow crazy ants and the major threat posed by climate change to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics. A key challenge and priority for the Authority is to influence research investment and communicate understanding of the effects of climate change, as well as help build regional ecological and community capacity and resilience, and
- sought support from fellow directors to be strong advocates for both the Authority and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Resolution

The Board noted the Chair's report.

2.4 Director and observer introduction

The Chair invited Board Directors and departmental representatives to introduce themselves.

Board directors provided background information on the skills and experience they bring to the organisation.

Departmental representatives provided an updated on current projects relevant to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area that were currently underway within their agencies.

3. INDUCTION

3.1 Introduction to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

Scott Buchanan gave a presentation on the outstanding natural and cultural values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (refer to **Attachment 2.1 (1)**). He noted that some of the keys to success for the Wet Tropics Management Authority included place-based governance systems; strong knowledge networks, partnerships and regional institutions; strong government support and appropriate resourcing and appropriate trans-disciplinary collaborative research programs.

Board directors were invited to ask questions about the general operations of the Authority.

Resolution

The Board noted the presentation from Executive director.

3.2 Communications and the guide to the Wet Tropics Management Authority – the organisation and its objectives

Leslie Shirreffs and Scott Buchanan provided general information and background material about the Authority's structure; strategic documents, protocols and key communication activities currently underway (refer to **Attachment 2.2 (3)**).

Directors discussed the Internal Operating Guideline 19: Protocol for communications between directors and authority staff (refer **Attachment 2.2 (1)**). Scott Buchanan advised this protocol has been updated to mitigate potential issues around miscommunication and dissemination of information, particularly in relation to Board Meeting matters.

Directors noted the *Guide to the Wet Tropics Management Authority* included advisory committees and liaison groups in the management structure. The terms of these committees had now expired, and a letter sent to all members thanking them for their contributions.

The Board was reminded that the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Community Consultative Committee were established under s40 of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (Queensland Act).

Directors discussed pecuniary interests, and noted that the guide states that under the Queensland Act 'a Director who has a personal interest or involvement of a financial nature in

a proposal shall declare that interest to the meeting' (s.25 and s.31). A confidential register of such interests will be maintained by the Secretary. Directors are required to disclose these interests at meetings of the Board and they will be recorded in the minutes.

Directors were advised that for future meetings they would be required to declare any other conflicting interests they may have on particular matters (e.g. membership of a group actively lobbying the Authority over a particular issue.) This will be a standing agenda item at the beginning of each meeting.

Directors noted that in future, all board papers would be classified as one of three categories being:

- *Category A* – resolutions that are to be considered for endorsement by the Chair of Ministerial Forum and would only be referred to other Forum members if the Chair proposes to reject or amend the resolutions
- *Category B* - resolutions regarding major items (e.g. those involving the commitment of Australian funds, or committing Australia to particular actions) to be referred to all members of the Forum for consideration, or
- *Category C* - for items which do not need referral to Ministerial Forum i.e. items which can be determined by the Board of Directors.

Board members were advised that all approved board minutes would be publically available on the Authority's website.

Resolution

The Board:

- 1. endorsed WTMA Internal Operating Guideline 19: Protocol for communications between directors and authority staff (Attachment 2.2 (1)), and***
- 2. endorsed the section titled 'Wet Tropics Board' in the Guide to the Wet Tropics Management Authority (Attachment 2.2 (2)).***

3.3 WTMA governance

The Executive Director briefed Directors and Observers about the Authority's governance arrangements and strategic documentation applicable to the Authority, and were provided with hard copies of the 2014-2015 Annual Report and State of Wet Tropics Report. Directors would confirm a theme for the 2015-16 State of Wet Tropics report at the February 2016 meeting.

The board discussed the WTMA/NPSR Partnership Agreement. The Executive Director advised that EHP, WTMA and QPWS were keen to see continued State government investment into Wet Tropics World Heritage outcomes, and that this would be an item for discussion at the June 2016 Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum.

The board were provided copies of the 2013-18 Strategic Plan and requested that the Authority initiate a process for refreshing and contemporizing the document.

The board sought clarification about internal and external reporting mechanisms and were advised that they would be provided with a report on the implementation of the 2015-16 annual operating plan at the February 2016 meeting.

The board noted that the 30-year anniversary listing of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was in 2018 and that this should be celebrated appropriately.

Resolution

The Board noted the briefing on WTMA governance from the Executive director.

4. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

4.1 Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement Review

Rebecca Laggeroth briefed the board and advised that the Authority has a responsibility under the Act to have regard to the Aboriginal tradition of Rainforest Aboriginal people; and to liaise and cooperate with Aboriginal people particularly concerned with the land in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This is also reflected in the 2013-18 Strategic Plan, which states a goal of the Authority is to ensure Rainforest Aboriginal People are supported in expressing their knowledge, culture and management practices on country.

The Board were reminded that there has been a lot of change within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area since the Regional Agreement in 2005 was signed e.g. native title determinations, formation of Prescribed Bodies Corporates or Registered Native Title Bodies Corporates and changes in government policy and WTMA's program support focus.

The Board were extremely keen to ensure that the Authority develop and support a framework that promotes partnerships with Traditional Owners across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and that it was timely to review WTMA's strategic engagement approach with Rainforest Aboriginal people.

Directors agreed that a key role for the Authority would be to show regional leadership by collaborating with other agencies and organisations working with Rainforest Aboriginal people in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to support opportunities for them to cooperate in the management of the Area.

The board discussed options to ensure Rainforest Aboriginal people can keep informed and engaged with Wet Tropics issues including newsletters, on-country workshops and forums.

Resolution

The Board noted the update on the Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement Review.

4.2 Community Engagement Review

Patricia O'Loughlen addressed the meeting and advised that the Authority is currently developing a Community Engagement Strategy which will consider the possible options for informal as well as the structured engagement of its clients, stakeholders and communities of interest. The strategy aims to articulate an approach to the Authority's engagement activities

whilst also identifying key policies and procedures that will maintain the integrity of engagement.

Preliminary internal surveys have commenced, and the Authority's committees and liaison groups are being consulted. The results of this survey and progress with the strategy will be reported to the board at the February 2016 meeting.

Board directors discussed current projects within the organisation, including the yellow crazy ant eradication program and agreed that it was a good example for engaging with the community, in that it is issues-based, has community champions, is targeted, includes active communication outside of formal meetings and based on real partnerships.

Prof Iain Gordon commented that the Scientific Advisory Committee are an important resource for the Authority and that Wet Tropics researchers could play a lead role in promoting the value of Area to the regional community and also highlight the need to protect and manage it wisely to the international community.

Resolution

The Board noted the update on the Community Engagement Review.

4.3 Existing state of play in the Wet Tropics tourism industry

Paul Chantrill briefed the board and advised that the Authority was recognised within the tourism industry as producing quality guiding and interpretation, visitor awareness and conservation outcomes through tourism. He noted that the volume of work the Authority could do is extensive, and so the project work the Authority undertakes is developed strategically, in partnership with industry and agencies to secure support, co-investment and results.

Directors agreed that there are increasing opportunities to support Aboriginal community aspirations through tour guide training and developing tourism businesses.

The board discussed the various roles and responsibilities of our tourism partners and agreed that the Authority's focus should be on interpretation and product development that supports marketing (by industry), and that it was important to support quality presentation experiences for travellers.

Resolution

The Board noted the update regarding the Wet Tropics tourism industry.

4.4 Review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998

Max Chappell briefed the board on the background and relevant issues regarding the Wet Tropics Management Plan (the Plan) which is a key tool designed to ensure the protection of the Area through regulation of activities inside the Area which have the potential to impact on the Area's integrity.

The Act requires the Authority to review the operation of the WT Plan no later than 10 years after its approval and before the end of each subsequent period of 10 years after its approval. A final Wet Tropics Amendment Management Plan 2011 was prepared by the Authority as an

outcome of the review process. The Amendment Plan was endorsed by the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council on 12 August 2011 but has not come into effect, as it has not been approved by the Queensland Governor in Council.

Ten (10) years have passed since the first review commenced in 2005. There have been a range of changes to the Wet Tropics region's planning and development assessment landscape in the intervening period. Similarly, community and stakeholder views, situations and aspirations may be different now to what they were 10 years ago. The second review of the operation of the WT Plan is due to be completed before 22 May 2018.

Directors were provided with an additional briefing paper (**Attachment 3.4 (2)**) which outlined the potential options, benefits, scope and risks for reviewing the Wet Tropics Management Plan.

Resolution

The Board:

- 1. Noted that a draft Wet Tropics Amendment Management Plan was prepared by the Authority as an outcome of the review process in 2011, and that this included community consultation***
- 2. Noted that the Amendment Plan was endorsed by the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council on 12 August 2011 but has not come into effect as it has not been approved by the Queensland Governor in Council***
- 3. Recommended that amendments based on previous review process not proceed on the basis of the length of time that has elapsed since previous consultation***
- 4. Requested that the Authority seek endorsement from the Chair of Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum to commence the 2018 10-yearly review of the operation of the Wet Tropics Amendment Plan, and***
- 5. That this review should commence within the next 12 months.***

4.5 Yellow Crazy Ant eradication program

Lucy Karger briefed the board and advised that in 2013, the Authority secured a \$1.9 million grant from the Australian Government to support a five-year project to eradicate YCA from areas within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

To date, the Authority has completed five rounds of aerial treatment inside and adjoining the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The current treatment program will end with three final treatments scheduled in 2016, but this will not have completely eradicated the yellow crazy ants from the infestation area.

The Authority and its partners are seeking further funding to continue the program, and have submitted a costed proposal (\$5.06M/year for ten years) to the Australian Government.

The board were extremely keen to ensure the project continued into the longer term, and encouraged the Executive Director to continue to secure financial support from local, state and commonwealth governments. Directors offered their support and agreed to attend meetings, if requested, to assist in presenting a case for further funding.

Directors noted the risk yellow crazy ant posed to the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Area, and that it would be important to report on this as required through Queensland and Australian Government State of Environment and UNESCO periodic reporting framework.

The board also commended the work undertaken to date, particularly the community volunteers.

Resolution

The Board noted the update regarding the yellow crazy ant eradication program.

4.6 World Heritage Family

Terry Carmichael briefed the board and advised that the Authority was developing a narrative to describe the important linkages between the Wet Tropics and other Australian World Heritage Areas. These included story lines and resources for a range of communication products across the Authority, including the Daintree Digital Project, Tour Guide Program, Wet Tropic Connect and school education.

Scott Buchanan advised the Board that the presentation today was only a summary and to provide an opportunity to understand the approach, Terry Carmichael would be invited to provide an after-dinner presentation at the next board meeting.

Resolution

The Board noted the update on the World Heritage Family project.

4.7 Workforce capability planning

This item was not discussed due to time constraints. The board were advised that they would be briefed on this matter at the next meeting.

4.8 WTMA Budget update

Scott Buchanan briefed the Board on the Authority's budget and source of funding. Currently the Authority received around \$5M/year of base line funding from the State and Commonwealth, this amount has remained unchanged since 2005-6 and the Authority has been active in pursuing additional funds. The 2015-16 annual operating plan includes a project which specifically includes exploring the feasibility of philanthropic private sector funding. Progress on that project will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

Scott Buchanan reminded the board that the Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum approves the Authority's annual budget and that they will next meet in June 2016.

Resolution

The Board noted the current status of the Authority's approved budget for 2015-16.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 General board communications and meetings for 2016

Board directors discussed options for timing and distribution of board papers. There was general agreement that in future, paper copies would not be provided, unless necessary, and that those directors who did not have an-i-pad would be provided with one.

Directors were pleased with the format of papers and found the internal hyperlinks useful.

Board directors discussed proposed meetings dated for 2016 and agreed to the following:

- 11-12 February (including a site visit and evening welcome function)
- 3-4 May 2016
- 10-11 August (including a site inspection or field trip), and
- 16-17 November 2016.

Resolution

The Board confirmed board meeting dates for 2016.

5.2 Acknowledgement of outgoing board directors

Board directors requested that a letter of thanks be sent to outgoing Board directors, thanking them for their contributions to the Authority and to World Heritage matters.

5.3 Board communique – meeting No 94

Board directors were provided with a draft of the communique and invited to make comment prior to distribution.

Resolution

The Board approved the Wet Tropics Board communique (Attachment 4.3 (1)).

5.4 Board agenda items Meeting No 95

Board directors confirmed that the two-day meeting in February 2016 will be held in Cairns, and include both a site visit and an informal meet and greet with Wet Tropics friends and community leaders. Some of the issues to be included on the agenda include:

- update on community engagement, Rainforest Aboriginal strategic engagement and community engagement strategy
- briefings on workforce capability, strategic investment projects and mid-year budget and work plan review, and
- presentation on QPWS on-ground management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (NPSR) and World Heritage families.

ATTACHMENTS

2.1 (1)	Board welcome to WHA.PPT
2.2 (1)	Internal Operating Guideline 19 - Protocol for communications between directors and authority staff
2.2 (2)	Guide to the Wet Tropics Management Authority – the organisation and its objectives
2.2 (3)	WTMA communication and guide to the Authority.PPT
2.3 (1)	2014-2015 WTMA Annual Report
2.3 (2)	2014-2015 WTMA State of Wet Tropics Report
2.3 (3)	WTMA / NPSR Partnership Agreement 2014-2016 Final Report
2.3 (4)	WTMA Strategic Plan 2013-2018
3.4 (1)	Key Amendments: Wet Tropics Amendment Management Plan 2011
3.4 (2)	Options, benefits, scope and risks for reviewing the Wet Tropics Management Plan
3.8 (1)	WTMA operating budget 2015-16
4.3 (1)	Board communique No 94