



## Communiqué

Board Meeting No 95

11-12 February 2016

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The board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) convened for its second meeting in Cairns on 11-12 February 2016.

The first day included a field trip to a number of sites around Kuranda. The board travelled to Russett Park to observe and discuss the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program, and visited the Kuranda Information Centre to discuss tourism issues and opportunities with centre staff, tourism officers and members of local council. The board also met with Djabugay Tribal Aboriginal Corporation representatives at the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway Barron Falls Station where they learnt about the programs Djabugay people have been engaged in, and discussed future aspirations for tourism and culture.

On return to Cairns, the board met with Mr Craig Crawford MP, Member for Barron River to discuss issues such as wildlife passage and rehabilitation associated with upgrades to the Kuranda Range road and works undertaken by the department. Visitor interpretation signage, rehabilitation and additional infrastructure were considered at Henry Ross Lookout as a key presentation opportunity.

The board meeting on the second day focused on the priorities for the board during its tenure, the Authority's engagement programs, State of Wet Tropics reporting, workforce capacity planning, the Partnership Agreement with the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing, and an upcoming Ministerial Forum.

The board was updated on the development of the Authority's Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement Framework. It was acknowledged that the Authority's role in Rainforest Aboriginal engagement should reflect a post Native Title environment and support for Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Rainforest Aboriginal people to ensure meaningful and effective involvement in the management of the World Heritage Area. The board endorsed the framework and requested that the Authority meet with Rainforest Aboriginal members and organisations over the coming months to further discuss the proposed engagement framework.

The board also considered the Authority's proposed approach to strengthening community and stakeholder engagement and participation in the conservation, protection and presentation of the World Heritage Area. The board requested that the Authority strengthen its role in coordinating existing networks while seeking to develop online platforms and mechanisms to engage youth, encourage broader local community participation and generate greater awareness and interest of the Area and its values. It also encouraged the Authority to be flexible in initiating formal arrangements for addressing issues through committees and reference groups.

The board extended their congratulations to the yellow crazy ant team on receiving a Froggatt Award for their exceptional efforts to eradicate yellow crazy ants from the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Award was presented to Mr Frank Teodo (Cane Farmer), Dr Lori Loch (James Cook University), Mr Daniel Bateman (Cairns Post) and Ms Lucy Karger (the Authority) for their tireless efforts in highlighting the danger posed by the highly invasive and environmentally destructive yellow crazy ant. The board recognised the significant contribution they have made and the success of the community partnership approach with administrative support from the Authority. The board strongly believes that eradication of yellow crazy ants is possible and remains deeply concerned that the great progress made will be lost without sufficient future funding for the program.

The board identified the following strategic priority deliverables during the next three years:

- Secure sufficient funding to continue baiting programs and further research of yellow crazy ants as well as to develop a specialist management team with a goal of eradication.
- Pursue climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies to protect and preserve the integrity of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Progress a three year (2016 – 2019) Partnership Agreement with the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (NPSR) to support management of the protected area estate within the World Heritage Area.
- Further engage and partner with Rainforest Aboriginal people to develop economic opportunities through ranger programs, tourism and scientific research within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Recognise and utilise the outcomes of formal scientific research and knowledge held by Rainforest Aboriginal people to shape management of the World Heritage Area.
- Develop a formal mechanism for individuals and institutions conducting research within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to give back to indigenous communities they engage with, through both financial and knowledge transfer arrangements.
- Investigate options for ‘user pays’ mechanisms and how revenue might be used by the Authority in management, presentation and programs as well as to benefit Rainforest Aboriginal people and other communities within the World Heritage Area.
- Deepen the relationship with the community and increase relevance and recognition of the work done by the Authority.
- Improve presentation and marketing of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in conjunction with tourism and other stakeholders.

The board also hosted a meet and greet at the Wharf One Café in Cairns on Friday 12 February. Invited guests included Rainforest Aboriginal organisations, World Heritage Area partners and local and state government members. Attendees met with the board directors and heard about the Authority’s current activities and programs for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The next board meeting is scheduled for May 2016.