

RAINFOREST ABORIGINAL news

Issue ten : November 2019

World Heritage update

Welcome to the tenth edition of the Rainforest Aboriginal News (RAN). So far, 2019 has been a big year for the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) and it will only get busier.

This was the second time the two boards have officially met, and recognises the collaborative work between the organisations to deliver on shared activities and interests such as pest management, integrated landscape management, and empowering Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' aspirations.

Although the Authority and Terrain play different roles in the protection and management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the boards have committed to continue to proactively align skills, connections, knowledge and resources to deliver common land management and community objectives.

In late April, the Authority's board released a statement to the Queensland Government calling for urgent action and investment to support and improve the resilience and protection of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area from the threat of climate change.



If you are interested in nominating for either the SAC or the CCC, or would like more information, please email wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au



Leah Talbot and
Phil Rist
Directors,
Wet Tropics
Management
Authority Board

The next edition of Rainforest Aboriginal News is a special edition dedicated to the work of the Traditional Owner Leadership Group.



NRM update

Construction on the world's first dedicated cassowary land bridge, linking tracts of World Heritage-listed rainforest across the Bruce Highway, will begin in November. The infrastructure project is part of the highway upgrade at Smith's Gap near Tully. Terrain has been advocating for the construction of land bridges for some years.

In September, we facilitated a meeting between Traditional Owners and cassowary, Mabi and littoral rainforest recovery teams to progress landscape prioritisation for on-ground activities that will aid recovery.

Some other great news at Terrain: we made the Australian Financial Review's top 100 most innovative companies list, from over 800 nominated organisations across Australia and New Zealand.

It's important to acknowledge that we haven't done this on our own. Terrain's whole approach and the way we work is to bring people together to find new solutions. We also want to recognise the contribution of all partners Terrain works with, including Traditional Owners, who are so passionate about protecting the Wet Tropics environment.



Barry Hunter
Director,
Terrain NRM Board

Community Services Grant

The Cairns Regional Council's Community Services Grant is now open for events, activities and projects held between 1 March 2020 and 28 February 2021 up to \$4,000. To access information and a Grants applications form please visit: cairns.qld.gov.au/online/grants

This is the first of the **new** grant opportunities which provides financial and in-kind assistance to eligible community groups and organisations for cultural, social, sport and economic development initiatives. Events, activities or projects such as Youth Week, NAIDOC Week, Mabo Day or Reconciliation Week may be eligible for support.

Reconnecting with country to ensure cultural survival

Urumbal Pocket lies on the edge of what is now Koombooloomba Dam to the south of Ravenshoe. This rainforest pocket has activity dating back over 8,000 years and is the traditional country of the Jirrbal people.

The Traditional Owners of this area have embarked on a project, which will allow them to reconnect with country. Funding through the Department of Environment and Science's 'Looking after Country' grants program provided Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC the opportunity to assess the area.

The team brought together traditional and western knowledge systems to conduct a country-based survey to help build the capacity of Wabubadda to undertake future projects.

The team included Wabubadda field officers Bradley Gosam, Bradly Gosam Jr, Anthony Bean, BJ Bean and Liam Roberts along with archaeologist Asa Ferrier, botanist Andrew Ford and QPWS ranger Roger James.

“Their knowledge of country will help determine what plans Wabubadda will put in place for the management of the site, around both biodiversity and cultural considerations.”

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Introducing the new Indigenous faces of the Authority

With the recent recruitment process through the Yellow Crazy Ant (YCA) Eradication Program, we are pleased to announce and welcome four new and existing Indigenous employees working for the program and the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Welcome to Michael Solinas, Stephen Foster, Lirian Stockdale and Samuel Carroll.

Yellow crazy ants, listed among the world's 100 worst invaders, were first found within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area at Little Mulgrave National Park in 2012. The program is continuing to work and collaborate with the local Indigenous groups to enhance their methods to care for country with the knowledge and experience shared by the YCA staff and Indigenous ranger groups.

YCA field teams are pleased to be working alongside the ranger groups as they provide the knowledge and experience to be able to work on country. Staff are very passionate about the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and will continue their efforts to eradicate the invasive yellow crazy ant and preserve the Area for our future generations.

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PEOPLE : COUNTRY : CULTURE


Australian Government


National
Landcare
Programme

Terrain NRM is able to support th

Blending tradition and technology at Indigenous women's workshop



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Indigenous women are breaking new ground to help care for land and sea in the Wet Tropics.

Cardwell's Cindy-Lou Togo and Cairns' Laurissa Mundraby were among the first female Indigenous rangers in the Far North and their trailblazing has inspired others to join the ranks.

The pair shared their stories at a three-day workshop for Wet Tropics Indigenous women who care for land and sea. They said it was enriching natural resource management to see ranger practices and new technology blended with traditional knowledge including 'women's business'.

'I was watching the guys walking in and out while I worked in reception and my interest really started to grow,' Laurissa said. 'Nowadays I do tour-guiding for our Mandingalbay Ancient Tours, give presentations at schools about the Djunbunji Land and Sea Ranger Program, and share our culture and connection to country.'

Cindy-Lou is involved in seagrass, turtle and dugong monitoring as part of her Girringun Aboriginal Ranger role, and says it's rewarding to see seagrass slowly growing back over the years since Cyclone Yasi crossed the coast near Cardwell.

'We'd love to see more women caring for country in ranger programs and other roles in the future.'

Terrain NRM organised the workshop through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the Queensland Government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

Terrain NRM's Vanessa Drysdale said workshops enabled Indigenous women from all over the Far North to share knowledge and skills:

They all work in roles that are largely filled by males, so this workshop was also about better supporting Indigenous women with careers in natural resource management. We also visited cultural sites in the Tully region and workshopped ways to increase understanding of the cultural landscape, as well as the physical landscape, in the Wet Tropics region.



Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum 2019

The 2019 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum was held at Genazzano Retreat from 31 May to 2 June 2019. The Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) hosted the three-day forum and reported on the directions set by attendees at the 2017 regional workshop and 2018 regional forum. More than 80 participants from across the Wet Tropics willingly gave their valuable time, thoughts and ideas at this forum.

To date the TOLG has been:

1. developing a draft Implementation Agreement to refresh the 2005 Wet Tropics Regional Agreement
2. reviewing the Wet Tropics Management Plan (WTMP) to recognise the rights and interests of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples going forward.

Representatives from the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) presented the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD is an international legally binding treaty with three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity; the sustainable use of its components; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources. Its overall objective is to encourage actions that will lead to a sustainable future. This includes considerations in relation to the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples and local communities to be incorporated in all the programs of work under the convention.

Participants voiced their support to the First Nations Climate Summit, which took place on 4 June 2019. Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples clearly expressed that their land and waters are spiritually and materially under threat from climate change, and traditional knowledge and western science needed to address these threats and impacts together.

Participants re-affirmed their support for the TOLG, who will conduct a road show across the region to commence discussions with individual Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples beyond the forum. For a summary of the Regional Forum, please email Alicia.Haines@wtma.qld.gov.au

TOLG update

The Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) have been progressing the work as directed by participants at the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forums. As part of a commitment to its agreed role to support all the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples on this journey, the TOLG will be providing regular updates in the RAN, so keep an eye out.

The first meeting since the 2019 Regional Forum was on 6 September with a follow up telelink to discuss engaging an independent person to assist in progressing the refresh of the Regional Agreement over the next 12 months. Kath Moran and Miya Isherwood are the new TOLG Project Officers.

The TOLG have started the planning for the TOLG road show to engage all Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to discuss what the Implementation Agreement will be looking at achieving, the 'rubber hitting the road' concept and the new entity which should replace the TOLG. Keep an eye out for dates across the Wet Tropics in the new year.

Updates

What's been happening in the Wet Tropics...

10-18 August—National Science Week

14 August—Pecha Kucha Night celebrating science week

17 August—Pyramid Race

20-21 August—Authority board meeting

22 August—TTNQ tourism marketing conference

27 August—Annual Reef Guardian Network meeting

1 September—Carnival on Collins

6 September—TOLG meeting

6 September—TREAT AGM

7 September—National Threatened Species Day

15 September—Wangetti Beach Clean Up

17 September—Australian Committee for IUCN: Healthy People in a Healthy Environment symposium

20 September—Global Climate Strike

21 September—Mission Beach Community Cassowary Festival

21 September—Far North Wilderness Bike Tour

26 September—Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee workshop

27-29 September—Wallaby Creek Festival

3-4 October—TOLG workshop

5-6 October—Hinchinbrook Island Beach Clean Up

14-18 October—Koster's curse task force on Mamu country

27 October—Australian Heritage Grants closed

What's coming up...

11-17 November—National Recycling Week

14-15 November—Authority board meeting

27 November—GBRMPA Reef Guardian Sea Country Grants closes

31 December—Round 14 Cairns Regional Council's Community Services Grant closes