

RAINFOREST ABORIGINAL news

Issue eleven : February 2020

World Heritage update

Welcome to edition eleven of the Rainforest Aboriginal News (RAN), the first for 2020. We hope everyone had a safe and Merry Christmas. In this special edition, we will be sharing the work of the Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The TOLG has been working hard towards the refresh of the Regional Agreement, amongst other things, read more on the TOLG's progress on the following pages.

We held our last Board meeting for the year on the 14-15 November 2019. On day one of the meeting our Chair, Leslie Shirreffs launched the **Accept, Act, Adapt: Climate Adaptation Plan for the Wet Tropics 2020-2030** which was collaboratively developed with Rainforest Aboriginal Traditional Custodians, tourism interests, research entities, the conservation sector, NRM bodies and State agencies.

Fellow Board Directors, observers, staff and partners of the Authority attended the launch at the Cairns Botanical Gardens Visitor Centre.

The Wet Tropics Climate Adaptation Plan, is aimed at improving the resilience and protection of the World Heritage Area. We held key discussions regarding implementing climate actions under the Board's 10-point plan in tandem with the Climate Adaptation plan. Copies of the plan can be downloaded from wettropics.gov.au/climate-adaptation-plan-for-the-wet-tropics-20202030.

After the launch of the plan, we travelled to Babinda to meet with Liz Owen and Dennis Ah Kee of Jaragun NRM. Liz and Dennis were the winners of the 2019 Cassowary Award for Climate Change Leadership for leading environmental restoration in the Russell River catchment. Great work Dennis and Liz and thanks for showing us the innovative ways you are restoring country.

We would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing what 2020 brings.

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



NRM update

Terrain NRM has a new CEO, Stewart Christie, who has taken over from Carole Sweatman. Stewart brings extensive experience and knowledge to the job and it has been a pleasure working with him to continue our role in natural resource management and our work with many partners within the Wet Tropics biocultural region. Carole has moved on after 10 years as CEO – we thank her for her courageous and sound leadership and recognise her invaluable contribution, including to Traditional Custodian interests, over all those years.

Some of our projects that involved traditional custodians last year included working to protect mahogany gliders, cassowaries, Mabi forest and other natural landscapes from Mossman to Ingham, working as part of the Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project team on water sampling and catchment repair sites in Mamu and Gulgnay country and producing the 2019 Wet Tropics Report Card as part of Wet Tropics Waterways. The report card showed a continuation of moderate to good grades across most catchments.

Terrain NRM is also pleased to be hosting the TOLG consultancy arrangements for Cath Moran and Miya Isherwood. With project support from Cath and Miya, the TOLG has been working hard to refresh the 2005 Regional Agreement and you'll read more about it inside this edition. Terrain supports TOLG and, as the TOLG member for our organisation, I've been pleased to see the outcomes the group is moving towards.

Barry Hunter
Director, Terrain NRM Board



TOLG Update

Wow, what a year 2019 was for the TOLG. Throughout the year, we continued to progress the work to refresh the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement. As part of a commitment to Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics, we will be hitting the road throughout the Wet Tropics region to undertake a community roadshow.

These roadshows will provide an opportunity for all Bama to have their say and input into the process for the Refresh of the Regional Agreement and the proposed Implementation Plan, ways forward and options to think about. We encourage all Bama to come along to the meetings in your area and have your say.

The Story of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement

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Chrissy Grant is a descendant of the apical family of Maggie Queen, from Bailey's Creek in Kuku Yalanji Country on her mother's side and Torres Strait Islander (Mualgal from Kubin on Moa Island) on her father's side. Chrissy has worked nationally and internationally for more than 35 years with communities on cultural heritage management, conservation and protection. She was Director of Indigenous Heritage in the Australian Heritage Commission and later the Department of Environment and Heritage from 1996-2006. She has extensive networks with her domestic work and with the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Indigenous Network Conference, the International Indigenous People's Forum on World Heritage, and the IUCN World Parks Congress.



Allison Halliday is of the Malanbarra Clan of the Yidinji Tribe of the Gordonvale and Goldsborough Valley Region. Allison has been actively involved in Aboriginal issues, particularly Native Title, Cultural Heritage and Land Management for more than 30 years and Allison is passionate about supporting, assisting and empowering Rainforest Aboriginal Bama to self-determination.



Barry Hunter is a descendant from the Djabugay speaking people of the Cairns hinterland. He grew up beside the Barron River in the rainforest near Kuranda. Barry has experience working in government conservation agencies and the mining and exploration industry, community and not-for profit NGO's and recently as a consultant working around Aboriginal land management, carbon industry and community economic development. With more than 30 years' experience in Aboriginal affairs particularly in areas of land, natural and cultural resource management, Barry has a real passion building community capacity and planning that delivers sustainable social, cultural and economic outcomes within our communities.



Alwyn Lyall is a Kuku Yalanji man who currently sits on the board of directors for the North Queensland Land Council. Alwyn is a passionate man who brings great knowledge and is a well-respected member of the Traditional Owner Leadership Group. Alwyn has always been a strong advocate for Indigenous people and wants to see the preservation of our culture for future generations.



John Locke (apical Locke family), a Malanbarra Yidinji man, is a recognised native titleholder of the Goldsborough Valley. John is a biocultural diversity strategist and has extensive expertise and experience in Indigenous partnerships. John has more than 10 years' experience working in head office management positions within Queensland's environmental departments. John now runs his own consultancy, where he applies his focus through the critical lens of understanding Indigenous Peoples' primary substantive rights, knowledge systems and related spatial structures of customary landscape scales. As a member on the Authority's Scientific Advisory Committee, John has focused on Indigenous sciences and the rights and interests of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples.



Phil Rist is the Executive Officer of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation and the current male Indigenous Director on the Wet Tropics Management Authority board. Phil is a widely respected Nywaigi Indigenous leader whose skill and determination has played a key role in establishing Girringun Aboriginal Corporation as one of the most successful Indigenous community-based organisations in Australia. Phil has played a big role in the journey Rainforest Aboriginal People have played to self-determination and has been heavily involved over the years in the milestones that have been achieved by Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics.

For many decades, Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics have clearly said that they want to have meaningful roles in making decisions about Country and about the management of Country. These aspirations are reflected in the 2005 Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Regional Agreement, between representatives from Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics tribal groups and the Wet Tropics Management Authority, Queensland Government and Australian Government.

In 2017, some concerns were expressed at the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum, including the future management intent for National Parks in Queensland and how it would connect with the aspirations of Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics. Traditional Custodians acknowledged some progress. However, they wanted to see more meaningful change in the management and engagement on the ground. Participants at this forum supported an addition to the 2005 Regional Agreement that would bring about more support for the management of the Wet Tropics. The process to develop this addition has become known as the refresh of the Regional Agreement.



Joann Schmider identifies as a Rainforest Country traditional custodian through her apical family Brooks and Wari-barra locality group of the Mamu native title group of the Dyirbalic-speaking nation. Joann's passion is promoting

two-way understanding through Aboriginal peoples' self-determination, empowerment and participation in decision-making. She brings more than 30 years' experience across cultural, social, environment and economic development fields, and more than 10 years' experience advocating for the region's Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' interests. This includes as director in Mamu, Central Wet Tropics and other Rainforest Aboriginal corporations and of Terrain NRM; project officer for the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance 2012-2015; and in scientific, cultural values and Aboriginal knowledge networks. Joann is doing a PhD studying methods of supporting Wet Tropics' Traditional Custodians' involvement with tourism.



Dr Leah Talbot (apical ancestor George Mero) is a descendant of the Kuku Yalanji People from the Bloomfield River region. Leah has a Doctorate in Indigenous governance in Protected Area Management and has worked within

the conservation sector for many years. Leah has experience in environmental management, high-level Indigenous negotiations and developing participatory planning with Indigenous communities in Indigenous land management.

She has also worked as an Indigenous science researcher and has experience in developing projects in areas of Indigenous-led and collaborative Indigenous research methodologies and projects. Leah is the current female Indigenous Director on the Authority Board.

Who is the Traditional Owner Leadership Group?

The Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG) was established following a mandate from the 2017 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum to drive the refresh of the Regional Agreement. The TOLG is a strategic think tank supported and resourced by partners including the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority), North Queensland Land Council (NQLC) and Terrain NRM.

The TOLG membership is comprised of Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics from:

- the Board of the NQLC
- the Indigenous Board Directors and advisory members of the Authority
- the Indigenous Director of Terrain NRM
- and two independent members.

TOLG also acknowledges the work of previous members Dennis Ahkee, Victor Maund, Errol Neal, Tracey Heenan, Terry O'Shane, Kaylene Malthouse and Seraeah Wyles.

What has the TOLG done?

The TOLG members have held regular meetings to work with partners on progressing the refresh of the Regional Agreement and address issues relating to Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics aspirations more broadly. The TOLG have reviewed draft agreements and legal documents relating to the regional governance arrangements and have played a key role in providing input into the Authority's review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan.

The TOLG have been instrumental in the development of the Research Protocols, to support Traditional Custodians improved involvement in research on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services managed areas within in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. The TOLG has provided updates to Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics at the Regional Forums held annually. The TOLG will continue to work with government to improve, advance and achieve the aspirations of Traditional Owner-led management of country.

What TOLG has heard so far

The TOLG have heard from Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics that they continue to want to honour and uphold the 2005 Regional Agreement. They also want to acknowledge that the 20 tribal groups of the Wet Tropics are different groups, with different needs and aspirations. Some groups would like support for Healthy Country planning, while others are seeking to provide their professional services to government and other agencies.

Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics have expressed that successful management will require action at the local, sub-regional and regional levels. Clear commitment from government and partners to support these actions will also be necessary. The need to develop culturally appropriate regional governance arrangements for Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics is also required and suitable time is needed to do achieve this. It is also important to be careful to support the local decision-making process. TOLG needs to take on lessons from the past about cultural authority, appropriate resourcing, and building capacity within our wet tropics groups. The TOLG have observed how governments are constrained by policies, legislation, and frequent changes in their staff. TOLG understand there are opportunities to link current government policies and initiatives with the aspirations of Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics.

What will the refreshed Regional Agreement do?



The Regional Agreement is a historically significant document for Rainforest Aboriginal People. The process to develop the Regional Agreement was led by our Elders and was the first agreement of its kind to involve Traditional Custodians in the management of the Wet Tropics.

The refresh of the Regional Agreement is intended to reflect the current landscape of the Wet Tropics for example, there are so many more native title determinations now than when the agreement was first developed. It is also aimed to secure long-term commitment and support from different government agencies, while building a process to truly achieve meaningful support for Traditional Custodians in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

How to have a say

The TOLG and partners want to meet with and hear from all Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics. A series of sub-regional meetings – like a community engagement Roadshow, will be taking place over the coming months. The next Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Regional Forum will be on the 9-10 May 2020.

The Community Engagement Roadshow meetings will be occurring at these locations and on these dates:

- Innisfail – Monday 17 February 2020
- Ingham – Tuesday 18 February 2020
- Yarrabah – Monday 24 February 2020
- Atherton – Tuesday 3 March 2020
- Cairns – ~~5 March 2020~~ **17 March 2020**
- Mossman – 9 March 2020
- Ravenshoe – 31 March 2020

There will be notices emailed out to all Wet Tropics' Traditional Custodian networks including native title, cultural heritage bodies and other representative bodies, development and business entities. The main challenge is to hear the numbers of persons intending to come along, so please ensure you RSVP. [Refer to flyers for RSVP date].

For any questions or enquiries contact:

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or Sam: Samuel.Carroll@wtma.qld.gov.au

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Updates

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

14-15 November—Authority Board meeting, Cairns

14 November—Launch of the Accept, Act, Adapt: Climate Adaptation Plan for the Wet Tropics 2020-2030

9-10 December—TOLG meeting, Cairns

7 January—TOLG meeting, Malanda

9-10 January—TOLG meeting, Cairns

2 February—World Wetlands Day

13 February—The Healing Power of Story workshop

13 February—Anniversary of the National Apology

14 February—TOLG meeting Cairns

What's coming up...

25-28 February—National Indigenous Youth Empowerment Summit

29 February—Terrain NRM Board Meeting, Cairns

1 March—Clean up Australia Day

3 March—World Wildlife Day

8 March—International Women's Day

9-13 March—Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger workshops, Cairns

19 March—National Close the Gap Day

19-20 March—Authority Board meeting, Cairns

18 April—World Heritage Day

17-18 April—Wet Tropics Tour Guide Program Field Day