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 meaningfully support for Traditional Custodians in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Updates

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

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

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After the launch of the plan, we travelled to Babinda to meet with Liz Owen and Dennis Ah Kee of Jaragun RNR. 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’re 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. We 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, cassowarries, 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 Munu Gulnyka 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

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Please send your feedback, ideas and contributions for future issues to wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au

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• Atherton – Tuesday 3 March 2020
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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 from all persons intending to come along, so please ensure you RSVP. (Refer to flyers for RSVP date).

For any questions or enquiries contact:
Alicia: Alicia.Haines@wtma.qld.gov.au
Sam: Samuel.Carroll@wtma.qld.gov.au

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The Story of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement

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 Regional Agreement.

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 advice on governance arrangements and have played a key role in providing input into the Authority’s review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan.

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 meaningful action 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 a participatory co-design 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, resourcing, and building capacity within our wet tropics groups. The TOLG have observed how governments are constrained by policies, resourcing, and building capacity within our wet tropics groups. The TOLG have observed how governments are constrained by policies, resourcing, and building capacity within our wet tropics groups.

The TOLG members are supportive of a partnership approach with Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics. 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.

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What has the TOLG done?

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The TOLG have been instrumental in the development of the Research Protocols, to support Traditional Custodians improved involvement in research and governance arrangements. 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 Protocols, to support Traditional Custodians improved involvement with tourism.

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Leah Talbot
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.

Issue eleven: February 2020