The TOLG have continued to progress the work to refresh the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement as part of the commitment to Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics. As planned, a number of community roadshows were undertaken in Innisfail, Yarrabah, Atherton and Mossman however the overall attendance was far less than what was anticipated. These roadshows were to provide an opportunity for all Bama to have their say and input into the process for the refresh of the Regional Agreement. However, who would’ve predicted the course the last couple of months has taken with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. More information is provided in this newsletter. The Authority’s Board of Directors held its second board meeting of the year on 19–20 March via video conference for the first time ever. Throughout the two days, the board discussed the potential short-term and medium-term impacts of COVID-19 on Authority staff, our partners and Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, as well as the Authority’s capacity to implement its programs as planned. With engagement and consultation at the core of its work, the Authority will implement mechanisms to ensure engagement is maintained and projects are kept on track during this strange and challenging time.

The Aboriginal Partnerships team updated the board on the progress of the refresh of the Regional Agreement that is being led by the Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The pandemic has impacted progress of this, particularly regarding the community engagement roadshows that were scheduled for March and April. The TOLG and partners are currently reviewing their communications strategy to ensure that effective community engagement continues to occur.

There are some changes coming with the Authority’s board and committees. At the end of May, three of the Authority’s Board members stepped down at the end of their term: Anne Clarke, John Courtney and Leah Talbot. The recruitment process for their replacements is currently being finalised and the new members will be announced soon.

The Authority’s Scientific Advisory Committee and Community Consultative Committee recruitment process has been finalised, and the committees had their induction along with their first joint meeting on 22 May.

We would like to thank all outgoing board and committee members of the Authority and wish each of them all the best in their future endeavours.
The WTCMS Management Authority is able to support this important work with the assistance of the Australian and Queensland governments.

It’s up to all of us look after country and land.
This year’s Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Conference was proudly hosted by Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation and the Djabugay Bulumba Rangers in partnership with the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger (ILSR) program.

Themed ‘More than a Ranger’, this year’s conference brought together over 150 Indigenous rangers from all over the state. Indigenous rangers came from as far as Stradbroke Island and the Torres Strait Islands to share knowledge on caring for country.

Djabugay’s project manager, Barry Hunter, facilitated the three-day conference and presented some of the workshops throughout the week. Rangers were involved in several sessions exploring rangers’ involvement and role in tourism ventures. Workshops were held on Indigenous-led research, health and wellbeing, social media and public speaking. A highlight of the week was a special training and development session that was held at the Nyawarri Estate for the ‘From Bush to Buffet’ session—the group will showcase Djabugay people’s aspirations for a bush food and resource garden to retain cultural practices and explore economic culinary opportunities. The group enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch based on local resourcing and native ingredients before heading back to the conference in Smithfield.

The rangers attended the conference dinner that was emceed by local Murri actor and comedian Mark Sheppard. Special guest, the Hon. Leeanne Enoch (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts), thanked the rangers for the positive impact their culture and specialised knowledge of country bought to land management and conservation. Her encouraging words were received well, and throughout the night rangers were seen mingling and capturing images.

Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation gave a public thanks to Minister Enoch and to the ILSR program team before the night concluded with a handover to Gurringin Aboriginal Corporation, who will co-host the next conference in 2021. The final day of the conference included field trips to Mossman Gorge and Kuranda. The Bulumba rangers led the Kuranda field trip which featured a Skyrail trip to Kuranda and a guided tour of Jumun Creek with Errol Hunter. Rangers then embarked on a return trip to Cairns aboard the Kuranda Scenic Railway.

Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation would like to thank all the attendees; it was wonderful to have you all, and a pleasure to share in your insights, experiences and stories.

See you at the 2021 Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Conference!

Rainforest Aboriginal Grants 2020

Round one of the Rainforest Aboriginal Grants program for the 2019/20 financial year has now closed. We thank all those who submitted an application. The Authority will be notifying all applicants of the results. Round two for the Rainforest Aboriginal Grants program will open Monday 13 July 2020. Rainforest Aboriginal People and their organisations can apply for funding to support projects within the Wet Tropics Bio-cultural Region.

What’s available? Funding and support from $5,000–$10,000 (GST exclusive).

Who can apply? Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and their organisations who are doing work on cultural or natural resource management including: ranger groups, RNTBCs, PBCs and private Indigenous-owned enterprises with a focus on working on country. Applications can be submitted by individuals or groups and evidence of support from the Traditional Owner group or PBC/RNTBC of the area is required.

What projects will the Authority fund? The Authority will fund projects that align with the Authority’s Strategic Plan. Some examples include:

- Planning to support management of country from impacts such as climate change and other threats.
- Support Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples through projects promoting presentations and monitoring of cultural sites.
- Develop cultural education and training to involve the community.
- Livelihood development around tourism and recreation.
- Research and recording of traditional ecological knowledge.

The process: Applications will be accepted from 13 July 2020 and close on 27 July 2020. Applicants will be notified of the outcome by 10 August 2020. Successful applicants will need to sign a funding agreement with the Authority.

How to apply? Applications are available via email. Please contact Alicia Haines alicia.haines@wtma.qld.gov.au or 07 4041 0500 for a copy of the application and grant guidelines.

Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples’ help to improve water quality

Mama and Guilgnay people have been helping to monitor water quality in the in situ water quality monitoring in the Major Integrated Project.

Five indigenous water quality samplers have joined the project team to help collect samples from waterways and piezometers.

The community-designed project is trialling different methods to improve water quality in farming hotspots, and ultimately the Great Barrier Reef.

The new team members have trained with water quality scientists from the Queensland Government’s Department of Environment and Science, and the Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project. The team will work with Water Quality Leader in the Major Integrated Project, Alicia Buckle, Terrain NRM’s water quality leader, to help with data collection, which is a fundamental element.

“*This project relies heavily on people monitoring in the field,*” she said. “*Our new team members are a huge help for data collection, which is a fundamental element.*”

The Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project is funded by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program. The project also includes the construction of water treatment systems ranging from bioreactors and high-efficiency sediment basins to wetlands.

It’s up to all of us to look after our own land and sea.
The TOLG have continued to progress the work to refresh the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement as part of the commitment to Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics. As planned, a number of community roadshows were undertaken in Innisfail, Yarrabah, Atherton and Mooma however the overall attendance was far less than what was anticipated. These roadshows were to provide an opportunity for all Bama to have their say and input into the process for the refresh of the Regional Agreement. However, who would’ve predicted the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. More information is provided in this newsletter. The Authority’s Board of Directors held its second board meeting of the year on 19–20 March via video conference for the first time ever. Throughout the two days, the board discussed the potential short- and medium-term impacts of COVID-19 on Authority staff, our partners and Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, as well as the Authority’s capacity to implement its programs as planned. With engagement and consultation at the core of its work, the Authority will implement mechanisms to ensure engagement is maintained and projects are kept on track during this strange and challenging time.

The Aboriginal Partnerships team updated the board on the progress of the refresh of the Regional Agreement that is being led by the Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The pandemic has impacted progress of this, particularly regarding the community engagement roadshows that were scheduled for March and April. The TOLG and partners are currently reviewing their communications strategy to ensure that effective community engagement continues to occur. There are some changes coming with the Authority’s board and committees. At the end of May, Three of the Authority’s Board members stepped down at the end of their term: Anne Clarke, John Courtney and Leah Talbot. The recruitment process for their replacements is currently being finalised and the new members will be announced soon.

The Authority’s Scientific Advisory Committee and Community Consultative Committee recruitment process has been finalised, and the committees had their induction along with their first joint meeting on 22 May.

We would like to thank all outgoing board and committee members of the Authority and wish each of them all the best in their future endeavours.

**Welcome to new staff**

Buddy Ahmat

Buddy recently commenced employment with the Wet Tropics Management Authority in the Principal Project Officer (Indigenous Identified) position with the Aboriginal Partnerships team. Prior to this, he was employed as the Senior Heritage Liaison Officer for 10 years with the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Far North Queensland. Buddy was born and raised on Thursday Island and relocated to Cairns which he now has called home for the past 11 years. He proudly identifies as being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with connections to the Kungarakan (Northern Territory), Kaurareg (Torres Strait/Northern Peninsula Area) and Mabuyag (Torres Strait) language groups. Buddy has worked extensively in local and state government and brings with him over 37 years of experience and knowledge working with Indigenous people, more recently in the fields of cultural heritage, Native Title and Indigenous engagement.

Michael Morta

Michael has recently been appointed as Terrain NRM’s Biodiversity and Indigenous Engagement Coordinator. In this role he’ll be monitoring threatened species and ecological communities across the Wet Tropics region. He will also be working with Wet Tropics Traditional Owners. Michael is a proud Ngadjarr-Idj Traditional Owner. Michael works on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8:30am–1:30pm, and on Thursdays from 8:30am–12:30pm. He can be contacted on 07 4043 8000 or by emailing: michael.morta@terrain.org.au

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


19–20 March: Wet Tropics Management Authority board meeting

8 April: Land Restoration Fund First Nations webinar

23 April: Looking After Country Grants closed

20–21 May: Wet Tropics Management Authority board meeting

26 May: National Sorry Day

27 May: 1967 Referendum

27 May–3 June: Reconciliation Week

3 June: Mabo Day

**What’s coming up in the Wet Tropics...**

5–12 July: NAIDOC Week ‘Always Was, Always Will Be’

10–12 July: Cairns Indigenous Art Fair online presentation

**Don’t miss out**

Subscribe to Rainforest Aboriginal News!

wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au

We acknowledge Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples as the traditional custodians of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and recognise their connection to this cultural landscape. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

**World Heritage update**

Welcome to the 12th edition of the Rainforest Aboriginal Newsletter (RAN). In this edition we share some of the on-ground stories that have been happening in the Wet Tropics region. Unfortunately, the 2020 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples’ Regional Forum scheduled for May has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More information is provided in this newsletter.

The Authority’s Board of Directors held its second board meeting of the year on 19–20 March via video conference for the first time ever. Throughout the two days, the board discussed the potential short- and medium-term impacts of COVID-19 on Authority staff, our partners and Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, as well as the Authority’s capacity to implement its programs as planned. With engagement and consultation at the core of its work, the Authority will implement mechanisms to ensure engagement is maintained and projects are kept on track during this strange and challenging time.

The Aboriginal Partnerships team updated the board on the progress of the refresh of the Regional Agreement that is being led by the Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The pandemic has impacted progress of this, particularly regarding the community engagement roadshows that were scheduled for March and April. The TOLG and partners are currently reviewing their communications strategy to ensure that effective community engagement continues to occur.

There are some changes coming with the Authority’s board and committees. At the end of May, Three of the Authority’s Board members stepped down at the end of their term: Anne Clarke, John Courtney and Leah Talbot. The recruitment process for their replacements is currently being finalised and the new members will be announced soon.

The Authority’s Scientific Advisory Committee and Community Consultative Committee recruitment process has been finalised, and the committees had their induction along with their first joint meeting on 22 May.

We would like to thank all outgoing board and committee members of the Authority and wish each of them all the best in their future endeavours.

In this difficult time, we encourage everyone to stay positive and take care.

Dr Leah Talbot and Phil Rist

Directors Wet Tropics Management Authority Board

**NRM update**

We are pleased to announce that Michael Morta has joined Terrain as our new Biodiversity and Indigenous Engagement Coordinator. His background in marine, indigenous liaison and cultural heritage roles, and his knowledge of Wet Tropics landscapes and communities is a welcome asset to our team, particularly to our Building Rainforest Resilience project.

Michael has joined Terrain in a very interesting time: just as the COVID-19 pandemic leads to changes in the way we operate, particularly for field work and consulting with the community. Terrain is in a good position thanks to the leadership of our CEO, Stewart Christie and board chair Keith Noble, who took early and definitive action for the organisation.

Terrain is now working on the best ways to keep in touch with you all. Like many organisations, our face-to-face group meetings are moving online, we are investigating alternative ways of engaging with partners, stakeholders and the wider communities.

In other news, it was great to see the Traditional Owner Leadership Group rolling out road shows in February and early March to engage Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples in the review of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement. Meetings were held in Innisfail, Atherton, Cairns and Mooma before COVID-19 measures. We are now looking at other ways to keep the community informed.

I also enjoyed being part of the recent Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Conference, hosted by the Djabugay Bulmba Rangers in conjunction with the Queensland Government at Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park. One hundred and fifty rangers from all over the state were at the event. The annual conference is a great way to share knowledge on caring for country.

Barry Hunter

Director, Terrain NRM Board