

Wet Tropics Scientific Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 16 November 1972. The World Heritage Convention came into force in 1975. The World Heritage Convention promotes cooperation among nations, in order to identify and protect heritage that is of Outstanding Universal Value and ensure its conservation for current and future generations. Australia ratified the Convention in August 1974.

Under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (the Act), the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) is established to ensure that Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention is met in relation to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (the Area). Australia's obligation is to protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations the Area.

As a body corporate operating under the requirements of both Australian and Queensland legislation, WTMA's structure enshrines its engagement with the Queensland and Australian governments and a range of industry and community stakeholders throughout the Wet Tropics region. WTMA operates as an administrative unit within the Queensland Government's Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) and is subject to Queensland public sector legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines governing administrative functions and arrangements. The Director-General of DETSI is the accountable officer for WTMA under the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2009. WTMA is responsible to the Director-General regarding compliance with Queensland Government administrative and financial standards.

WTMA comprises of a board of seven directors and more than 40 technical, professional and administrative officers. The Board is responsible for the way WTMA performs its functions and exercises its powers. It is also the role of the Board to decide objectives, strategies and policies to be followed by WTMA. WTMA's strategic goals are in its [Wet Tropics Strategic Plan 2020-2030](#).

Under the Act, WTMA is required to establish two statutory advisory committees: a Scientific Advisory Committee (the Committee) and a Community Consultative Committee.

2. Purpose of the Wet Tropics Scientific Advisory Committee

As outlined under Schedule 1 of the Act, the function of the Scientific Advisory Committee is to advise the Board on scientific research that will contribute to the protection and conservation of the Area and scientific developments relevant to the protection or conservation of the Area.

The Scientific Advisory Committee supports the Board by providing advice on:

- scientific research and monitoring priorities which will contribute to the protection, conservation, rehabilitation and presentation of the Area
- new information or developments in science relevant to protection, conservation or presentation of the Area
- the scientific basis for management policies and practices
- appropriateness of research proposed for approval by WTMA in terms of scope, quality and relevance to management of the Area

- maintenance of World Heritage values and integrity of the Area
- impacts of proposed developments on the World Heritage values of the Area
- new ways of engendering innovative, applied research in and around the Area
- reviewing research and the evidence base underpinning management activities conducted by WTMA.

3. Membership

The Scientific Advisory Committee will comprise of approximately eight members.

Membership will have an equitable gender composition aligning with Queensland Government requirements.

Membership is based on scientific expertise and knowledge applicable to the protection, conservation, rehabilitation and presentation of the Area. Members should be involved in or have sound scientific knowledge or expertise in one or more of the following:

- biophysical sciences and ecology, especially in relation to the Wet Tropics
- natural heritage planning and/or conservation, including threatened species conservation
- bio-cultural expertise, especially Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples cultural heritage knowledge or expertise—including traditional knowledge and policy or issues pertaining to Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples intellectual property
- heritage presentation and/or nature-based tourism
- socio-economic disciplines including governance, social impact assessment, nature-based recreation and environmental economics
- disciplines related to climate change, forest restoration, carbon markets, restoration investment, biosecurity or fire ecology.

Members should also be familiar with working in an inter/transdisciplinary context.

Preferably, members will have active research interests associated with the Area and the committee will comprise representatives from a range of institutions.

To ensure that Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' perspectives are appropriately incorporated into Committee deliberations, membership will include at least two Rainforest Aboriginal People, preferably one male and one female, subject to interest and availability. Advice may also be sought through the Indigenous Advisory Committee ¹as required.

Observers:

Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI)—Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P), Terrain NRM and other formally recognised managers of the Area will be invited as observers to the Committee meetings and will provide advice and

¹ The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) is a skills-based committee that provides culturally informed advice and guidance on plans, policies and programs by WTMA and Terrain NRM. More information about the IAC can be found [here](#).

information where requested. Other Board Directors, WTMA officers, guests and specialist advisers may be invited by the Chair to attend and to provide advice.

4. Roles and responsibilities

WTMA's Board is responsible for:

- appointing a Chair for the Committee
- providing direction to the Committee on matters for which it is seeking the views of the community
- providing feedback to the Committee regarding advice provided by the Committee to the Board.

The Committee Chair has the following responsibilities, to:

- preside at all meetings at which he/she is present in accordance with formal meeting protocols
- liaise with the Committee secretariat as required to develop agendas and approve meeting minutes
- facilitate discussion on the agenda items, seeking consensus on issues and developing recommendations to provide to the Board
- liaise with the Chair of the Community Consultative Committee and/or Indigenous Advisory Committee to encourage collaboration between committees and coordinate advice to WTMA
- facilitate participation of all committee members in the meeting and encourage members to share and exchange information with each other and WTMA
- present the Committee's advice/recommendations, including unanimous, majority and/or divergent views on discussion topics
- speak publicly on behalf of the Committee
- maintain adherence to the code of conduct at meetings
- maintain dialogue with WTMA and committee members about ongoing and relevant issues in-between meetings to support progress of actions from meetings.

Committee members have the following responsibilities to:

- attend and participate in committee meetings and ongoing deliberations
- direct their expertise and experience towards:
 - advancing the views of their respective sector or community of interest and debating and formulating a view on issues brought before the Committee to make appropriate recommendations
 - providing meetings with an up-to-date analysis of their sector and opportunities available for WTMA and members to work collaboratively
 - providing up-to-date advice at meetings (when requested) on issues identified on the agenda
- consult with other experts, industry and stakeholders and encourage wider knowledge about Wet Tropics World Heritage issues (subject to any overriding confidentiality and media provisions under these terms of reference)
- work cooperatively and endeavour to reach a consensus view on issues discussed where possible
- participate in working groups as agreed
- follow up on committee actions as per the minutes
- behave in a professional manner and maintain confidentiality on identified sensitive issues.

The Committee secretariat is responsible for:

- ensuring a timely and appropriate level of administrative support
- dissemination of information to members, and
- providing background information considered reasonably necessary to assist members in their deliberations which may include agendas and minutes from the Community Consultative Committee meetings.

5. Appointment of the Committee Chair

The chair of the Committee will be a Board Director appointed by the Chair of the Board.

6. Appointment of members

Appointment to the Committee will be by invitation of the Board following a call for expressions of interest.

Priority will be given to gender balance and consideration will be given to other equity and diversity matters within the Committee.

7. Term of appointment

The term of the Committee shall be for a three-year period commencing on the convening of the first committee meeting for the term. There is no limit on the number of terms that can be served by a committee member. However, committee members may only be appointed subject to an application and assessment process. When appointing committee members, the Board should be cognisant of ensuring that there is adequate renewal of skills, experience and perspectives in the makeup of the Committee.

Members may resign at any time in writing to the Chair of the Board.

The Board may undertake mid-term appointments to allow for continuity of the Committee's corporate memory whilst also providing for the filling of member vacancies.

8. Meeting attendance and time commitments

As membership of the Committee is on an honorary basis, WTMA is appreciative of time commitments made by members. Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that members will attach a priority to attending and participating at committee meetings. It is also expected that members will allocate appropriate preparation time for reading of agenda papers and responding to issues where the Committee's advice is sought.

Meeting attendance is on a voluntary basis as per Queensland Government policy, with Rainforest Aboriginal committee members paid in accordance with the [Department of the Environment, Tourism and Science Innovation \(DETSI\) First Nations Payment Guide](#).

Where a committee member is not already covered for attending a committee meeting by the member's employer or research institution, personal out-of-pocket expenses, including travel and living expenses associated with committee meeting attendance will be met by WTMA at the standard state government rate. Where members are unable to attend meetings due to long absences the Board will select an interim replacement of that member.

9. Termination

The Board reserves the right to terminate an individual's membership of the Committee at any time subject to procedural fairness. A termination notice must be in writing from the Chair of the Board.

The Chair of the Board may consider terminating a membership of the Committee if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without a valid reason.

10. Meeting location and frequency

Meetings may be held online with at least two in-person meetings per annum normally in Cairns. However, the Committee may meet in other Wet Tropics locations, particularly when there is an opportunity to inspect sites/issues of interest.

The Committee will meet at least three times per year and at other times as deemed necessary. The Committee will participate in joint meetings with the Community Consultative Committee and Indigenous Advisory Committee at least once a year.