

Wet Tropics Management Authority  
**Strategic Plan**  
*2008 - 2013*



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## A message from the chair

On behalf of the WTMA Board I am proud to present this new strategic plan that will guide the priorities and activities of WTMA over the next five years.

WTMA has achieved much since its establishment. Through its achievements it has positioned itself as a leader in World Heritage management both locally and internationally. Management of the World Heritage Area is a complex and challenging task. The Authority has demonstrated its capacity to protect World Heritage values while meeting the needs of the regional community. WTMA serves the community on behalf of the Australian and Queensland Governments and its continued success depends on the support of both governments.



One of WTMA's strengths is its effectiveness in delivering both national and state government priorities. The objectives of this plan have strong links to the Australian Government's 'Caring for our Country' initiative and the Queensland Government's 'Smart State' vision. WTMA's goals meet its obligations as a World Heritage manager and reflect government priorities. They include:

- the protection of heritage values consistent with the World Heritage convention and Queensland and Australian heritage legislation
- a community that understands and appreciates the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and is actively involved in its conservation
- the well-being of Rainforest Aboriginal people and their active role in management of the Wet Tropics
- national and international recognition of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area for the highest standards of protection, management, presentation and governance
- ecologically sustainable development in the region that supports the conservation of the World Heritage Area
- Queensland and Australian Governments that are well informed in making policy decisions and support WTMA and the World Heritage Area
- excellence in corporate governance and management.

## A message from the chair

Partnerships are central to WTMA's business. Community support for World Heritage conservation is vital. WTMA remains committed to maintaining and strengthening community engagement in the management of the Area. It will continue to seek opportunities to work with others wherever possible to ensure its World Heritage goals are met.

The Authority recognises the importance of adapting quickly to change in response to community and government needs. New weeds and feral animals, growing external pressures and changing community needs and expectations are some of the issues it will continue to address.

This strategic plan heralds an exciting new era of management for WTMA. The changing landscape of natural and cultural resource management is an opportunity to build on the Authority's previous achievements and, with the support of its industry and scientific partners, and the community, implement new management strategies that will reaffirm its position as a leader in World Heritage management.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those key people who have supported WTMA in the protection of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and look forward to their continued support in the future.



John Grey AC  
Lieutenant General (Retd)  
Chair

## About this strategic plan

***This strategic plan sets out the Wet Tropics Management Authority's directions over the next five years. It identifies our contemporary mission, our goals and the associated objectives and actions that we will implement in coming years. The plan demonstrates the benefits we intend to create for our stakeholders: the Queensland and Australian Governments, our partner agencies and the Wet Tropics community.***

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) is an independent authority that assists the Queensland and Australian Governments in the challenging responsibility of ensuring Australia meets its obligations under the World Heritage Convention in respect of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. We achieve this through:

- administration of the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*
- administration of the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*
- leadership, planning and engaging with the Wet Tropics community
- partnerships with other agencies and community organisations.

We have developed this plan in consultation with our partners and communities. Our aim has been to ensure that we take account of their knowledge, interests and aspirations.

As WTMA's highest level of organisational planning, this strategic plan will provide a basis for further detailed planning. The annual business plan and budget, project plans and staff training and development will each have their basis in this strategic plan.

Continued consultation with the Wet Tropics community and WTMA's partners will provide critical input to WTMA's implementation of this strategic plan.

# History and context

UNESCO inscribed the Wet Tropics of Queensland onto the World Heritage List in 1988. In the early 1990s the Queensland and Australian Governments reached an agreement over the management of the area. Based on this, the Queensland Parliament enacted the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* that provided for the establishment of WTMA and a range of administrative processes that would ensure appropriate protection of the World Heritage Area.

WTMA is accountable to both the Australian and Queensland Governments through an independent Board of Directors. The two governments select directors who provide substantial knowledge and experience to the work of the Authority. As well as ensuring a high standard of governance in the administration of World Heritage programs, the Board maintains close links with the Wet Tropics community, ensuring programs are relevant to community needs and aspirations.

WTMA has achieved much since its establishment. The *Wet Tropics Management Plan* was adopted in 1998 after an extensive program of consultation in the regional community. The Plan provides a clear basis for decision making about developments and activities within the area. In its approach to assessment and issue of permits for activities in the Area, WTMA has demonstrated its capacity to protect World Heritage values while respecting the needs of the regional community.

***Since the World Heritage listing the Queensland Government, with support from WTMA, has substantially increased the proportion of the World Heritage Area reserved as national parks, improving conservation security for the Area.***



## History and context

WTMA works in close partnership with Queensland Government agencies involved in managing the World Heritage Area, in particular the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA plays a predominant role in on-ground service delivery in the World Heritage Area and is a strong partner in formulating plans and policies for the Area. The EPA provides funding to WTMA which is allocated to the management of parks and protected areas.

The Australian Government, through the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) provides the majority of WTMA's funding. WTMA endeavours to achieve close alignment with DEWHA's heritage conservation objectives and to support DEWHA in regional implementation of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. WTMA also endeavours to maintain close links with the Australian Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism in the implementation of tourism industry programs for the region.

Engagement of communities in World Heritage management programs has been a feature of WTMA's work. A well-supported Community Consultative Committee has a central role in WTMA's community engagement program. This, along with other committees and engagement processes, has improved community involvement in decision making and provided for greater participation of the community in management of the World Heritage Area.





# History and context

Engagement of Rainforest Aboriginal people has been an important focus for WTMA. WTMA played a lead role in the establishment of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement, completed in 2005, that outlines the formal partnership for engagement between Rainforest Aboriginal people and Australian and Queensland Government agencies involved in World Heritage management. It also underpins the Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee that provides cultural heritage advice to the Board on behalf of the 18 tribal groups in the World Heritage Area.

WTMA's role as a provider of knowledge about the Wet Tropics and its values and management is well established and respected. An authoritative Scientific Advisory Committee, comprising leaders in scientific and other relevant research, advises the Board and the Authority, adding great strength to WTMA's capabilities. WTMA played an important role in the establishment of the former Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre and continues to offer leadership in setting the regional research agenda. A key achievement of the Authority is the recent completion of a major vegetation-mapping project for the whole of the Wet Tropics bioregion.

WTMA has established a well-respected website and has generated substantial educational and promotional material concerning the Wet Tropics. WTMA's reputation as a World Heritage property manager means that it is identified as a source of advice and guidance for heritage management both in Australia and internationally.



# New challenges and opportunities

WTMA must continue to adapt to meet the needs and expectations of its investors and its partners and the community. WTMA faces a number of challenges in the future:

## ***A changed landscape***

The nature of the Wet Tropics landscape has changed over the last five years, with a much higher proportion of the World Heritage Area now securely protected in the Queensland national parks estate. The relationship between WTMA and EPA must continue to grow and adapt in response.

## ***New partners in natural resource management***

New regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations such as Terrain have recently entered the field. These NRM bodies are taking an active role in engaging landholders, local governments and the community in the promotion of sustainable natural resource practices. Such new ventures provide an exciting opportunity for new partnerships and the alignment of NRM objectives with the World Heritage conservation objectives of WTMA.

## ***Growing external pressures***

Through the implementation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan and the Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy, WTMA and its partners have been able to make good progress in conserving the World Heritage Area within its boundaries. However, development pressures in the surrounding landscape continue to increase. Population growth, landscape fragmentation, climate change, weeds, pest animals, and increasing tourist numbers create new challenges and impacts, demanding an effective response from WTMA and its partners.

## ***Demand for knowledge***

Growing and changing pressures on the World Heritage Area create demands for new knowledge that will lead to better-informed policy and management and provide a basis for changing community behaviours. WTMA has an important role to play in communicating knowledge and raising public awareness about the Wet Tropics.



# New challenges and opportunities

## ***Community expectations***

Community expectations of government agencies continue to grow and change, reflecting increasing standards of community knowledge and participation and changing demographics. WTMA needs to remain at the forefront of community engagement practice, recognising that protection of World Heritage values depends on the support, choices and behaviour of the community.

## ***Indigenous well-being***

The role of natural resource management agencies in programs that promote Indigenous community well-being continues to grow. WTMA's partnerships with Rainforest Aboriginal people create an important basis for further work in this area.

## ***Sharing experiences***

There are opportunities to capitalise on the skills and experience gained by WTMA and its partners in managing the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Heritage managers elsewhere in Australia and in the Asia Pacific could benefit from WTMA's experience and skills. In turn, management of the Wet Tropics could benefit by learnings from elsewhere.

## ***Working with government***

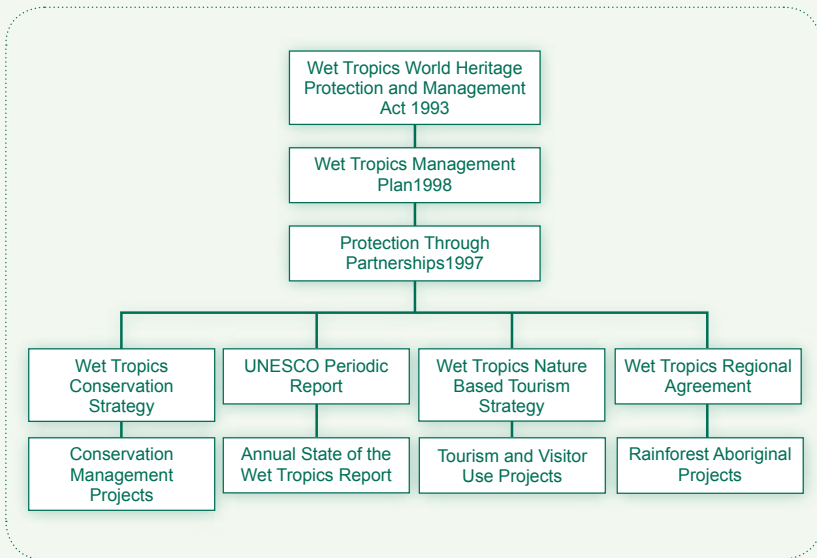
A distinctive challenge for WTMA lies in meeting the needs of both of the Australian and Queensland Governments' environmental priorities. Governments continue to develop and adapt regulatory and policy frameworks for natural and cultural resource management. New tools become available and old approaches fall out of favour. WTMA must be conscious of the need for change and to lead and adapt as required.



# Management framework

WTMA's functions and authorities are specified in Queensland legislation, with corresponding legislation enacted by the Australian Parliament. These Acts are intended to give effect to Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention. The Wet Tropics Management Plan is the principle statutory instrument regulating access, use and development of the World Heritage Area. WTMA's Plan is complemented by various non-statutory policies and strategies that guide management of the Area. The relationship between the main elements of the Wet Tropics management framework is shown below.

## World Heritage management framework



## Our mission

**Lead, inspire, advise and support the Australian and global community to protect and share the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in perpetuity.**

*Our mission statement reflects our awareness of the international significance of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. It acknowledges our role in protecting, conserving and rehabilitating the outstanding environmental and cultural heritage values of the Area, while presenting the Area to visitors to ensure improved understanding, appreciation and enjoyment now and transmitting the Area to future generations. It further acknowledges that achieving our goals requires the support of the community, in Australia and throughout the world.*



# Our roles

We fulfil a number of roles in delivering our mission. WTMA is, or aspires to be:

## **a leader**

in identifying World Heritage management priorities and mobilising resources to implement heritage stewardship projects

## **an administrator**

in identifying World Heritage management priorities and mobilising resources to implement projects

## **a partner and supporter**

of NRM agencies, Rainforest Aboriginal people, the tourism industry, local governments and community organisations in protecting and presenting the World Heritage Area

## **a facilitator and promoter**

of engagement in World Heritage management



## **a communicator and educator**

sharing information and knowledge of the World Heritage Area

## **a knowledge manager**

directing, collecting, analysing and communicating knowledge of the World Heritage Area as a basis for change

## **a mentor and advisor**

for heritage and NRM managers

## **an advocate**

for sustainable development in the Wet Tropics



# Goals, objectives and strategies

## Heritage protection

**Goal:** **Heritage values of the Wet Tropics of Queensland are protected and maintained consistent with the World Heritage Convention and Australian and Queensland heritage legislation**

**Objective:** The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is protected from adverse impacts of development and use

**Strategy:** *Manage impacts on the World Heritage Area through implementation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan and the Conservation Strategy, and by building capacity among infrastructure agencies, landholders and our NRM partners*

**Objective:** The biophysical and socio-economic condition of the World Heritage Area is widely known and understood

**Strategy:** *Collect and report on information about the condition, uses and management of the World Heritage Area as a basis for policy development and behavioural change*

**Objective:** Wet Tropics assessment and approvals processes are coordinated with related processes under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

**Strategy:** *Strengthen our partnerships with the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts to achieve efficiencies for both agencies and the community*





# Goals, objectives and strategies

Community partnerships

**Goal:** **The community enjoys, supports and understands the values of the World Heritage Area and the importance of Wet Tropics environments, and is engaged in its conservation**

**Objective:** Communities are well informed of Wet Tropics values, ecosystem services, threats and management

**Strategy:** *Communicate information to identified audiences about the values and management of the World Heritage Area using a wide variety of media appropriate to the audience and the messages*

**Objective:** Wet Tropics themes are widely studied in primary and secondary schools and universities as a basis for increased environmental knowledge, education and awareness

**Strategy:** *Support the study of Wet Tropics themes through the provision of educational resources, advice and encouragement in coordination with schools, universities and other partners*

**Objective:** The Wet Tropics community is engaged in the management of the World Heritage Area

**Strategy:** *Implement projects that support the involvement of communities in management of the World Heritage Area, ensure communities have opportunities to influence planning and decision making and grow the capacity of WTMA and partner agencies in community engagement practice*



# Goals, objectives and strategies

## Community partnerships

**Objective:** Implementation of natural resource management policy in the Wet Tropics region is coordinated among government and community organisations

**Strategy:** *Build and promote partnerships with other organisations including, in particular, the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Terrain NRM, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Natural Resources and Water, Reef and Rainforest Research Centre and local governments to strengthen management programs for World Heritage and to gain resource use efficiencies*

**Objective:** The tourism industry protects and appropriately presents the values of the World Heritage Area

**Strategy:** *Work in partnership with the regional tourism industry to contribute to marketing, industry development and promotion of sustainable tourism practices*

**Objective:** Knowledge about the Wet Tropics continues to be generated and communicated

**Strategy:** *Collaborate with research providers to guide and focus research programs and communicate outcomes*



# Goals, objectives and strategies

Indigenous well-being

**Goal:** **The well-being of Rainforest Aboriginal people is supported by their active role in the management of the Wet Tropics environment**

**Objective:** The rights and interests of Rainforest Aboriginal people are appropriately recognised and respected

**Strategy:** *Support implementation of the Regional Agreement through implementation of protocols, Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and other processes relating to the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples, in partnership with Rainforest Aboriginal people and their representative organisations and government agencies*

**Objective:** The Kuku Yalanji people resettle traditional country in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in accordance with the ILUA in a way that protects heritage values and ensures a basis for economically and socially viable communities

**Strategy:** *Develop and implement a project in partnership with the Kuku Yalanji people, the Cape York Land Council and partners in other agencies that will facilitate establishment of viable, sustainable communities*

**Objective:** The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is listed for its Indigenous cultural values

**Strategy:** *Support Rainforest Aboriginal people, the Queensland Government and the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts in achieving recognition of Indigenous cultural heritage on the National Heritage List and, subsequently, the World Heritage List*

**Objective:** Rainforest Aboriginal people and their organisations have strong capacity and capability to participate in development and implementation of management agreements and programs

**Strategy:** *Support, through advice, mentoring and other means, Rainforest Aboriginal people and their organisations in achieving effective participation of Aboriginal people in World Heritage management programs*

# Goals, objectives and strategies

## Heritage leadership

**Goal:** **The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is nationally and internationally recognised for the highest standards of protection, management, presentation and governance**

**Objective:** Achieve national and international recognition for the high standard of management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

**Strategy:** *Maintain and enhance Queensland, Australian and UNESCO reporting responsibilities on the condition of the World Heritage Area and, in particular, promote the establishment of monitoring procedures to identify any emerging impacts of climate change on the World Heritage Area and its values*

**Objective:** Heritage managers in the Asia-Pacific have improved capacity and support for their management of heritage places

**Strategy:** *In association with the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, AusAid and UNESCO, seek opportunities to contribute towards strengthening management capacity of heritage places in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region*



# Goals, objectives and strategies

Regional sustainability

**Goal:** Development in the region is ecologically sustainable and supports the conservation of the World Heritage Area

**Objective:** Threats to natural and cultural values of the World Heritage Area are confined to ecologically sustainable levels

**Strategy:** Establish projects in partnership with NRM agencies to address threats such as climate change, pests and weeds, inappropriate fire regimes, fragmentation and habitat loss, with the objective of strengthening the security and integrity of the World Heritage Area in the regional landscape

**Objective:** Local, regional and state wide planning instruments adequately protect heritage values

**Strategy:** Work with the Department of Infrastructure and Planning and local governments to promote the adoption of planning frameworks that protect World Heritage values and take opportunities through the planning system to protect World Heritage values threatened by inappropriate development



# Goals, objectives and strategies

## Alignment and support

**Goal:** **The Queensland and Australian Governments are well informed in making policy decisions about the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and support WTMA**

**Objective:** The Queensland and Australian Governments are aligned in their policy for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

**Strategy:** *Contribute to review and implementation of the intergovernmental agreement and related processes to assist policy alignment of the Queensland and Australian Governments and to ensure Wet Tropics World Heritage management remains effective and well-supported*

**Objective:** WTMA maintains effective relationships with governmental partners

**Strategy:** *Maintain close and open relationships with officials in the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, and the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism to ensure they give appropriate priority to Wet Tropics World Heritage needs*

**Objective:** Ministers are well supported and informed about the Wet Tropics

**Strategy:** *Provide timely, accurate, impartial and useful advice to Australian and Queensland Government Ministers and the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council*



# Goals, objectives and strategies

**Goal: WTMA demonstrates excellence in corporate governance and management**

**Objective:** WTMA business management meets all relevant standards

**Strategy:** *Establish, maintain and implement business systems conforming to Environmental Protection Agency standards, to ensure appropriate delivery of human resources, communications, finance and business planning services to WTMA*

**Objective:** The WTMA Board and advisory committees function efficiently and effectively

**Strategy:** *Establish, maintain and implement processes that ensure the Board and its committees are provided with accurate and timely advice, meetings are organised and conducted to high standards and that all decisions are recorded, communicated and implemented*

**Objective:** WTMA demonstrates sustainable office practices

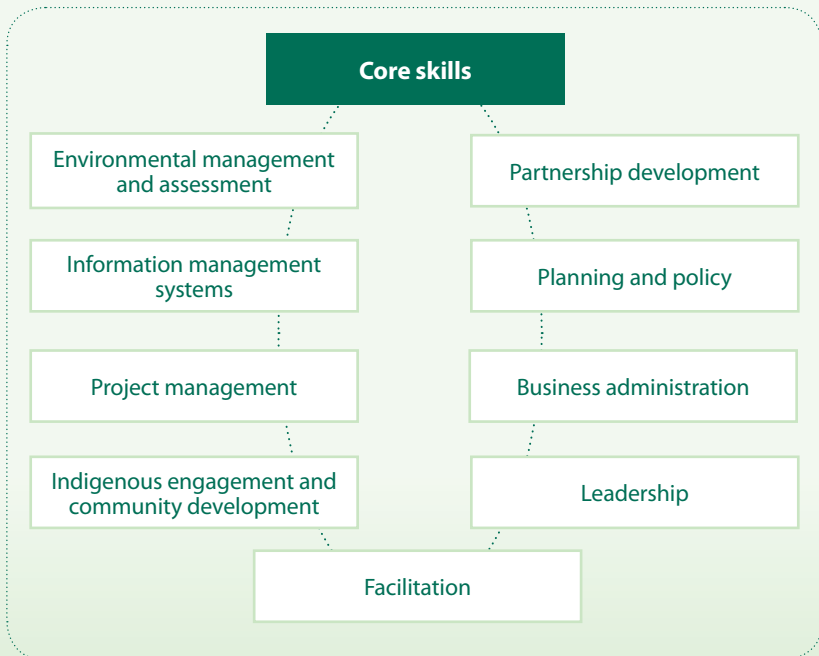
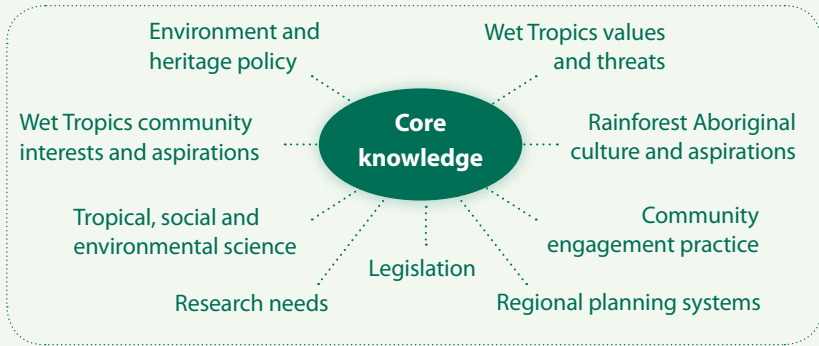
**Strategy:** *Establish an office Environmental Management System*

*Business management*



# Capabilities

WTMA must be aware of and work to maintain the organisational capabilities required to achieve its mission and goals. We derive our most important capabilities from the knowledge and skills of our staff. Some of the distinctive knowledge and skills WTMA must foster and maintain through recruitment, training and development are shown below.





# Values and behaviours

We are committed to being:

## **open**

willing to share information and ideas

## **ethical**

considering the impact of our behaviour and decisions on others

## **committed**

striving to protect the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

## **inclusive**

involving communities and partners

## **respectful**

acknowledging the rights, interests, needs  
and aspirations of others



# Values and behaviours

We are committed to being:

## **responsive**

quick to act on the concerns of others

## **adaptive**

growing and changing to meet new challenges

## **supportive**

of our colleagues, our partners and the community

## **professional**

providing consistent service excellence



# Implementation

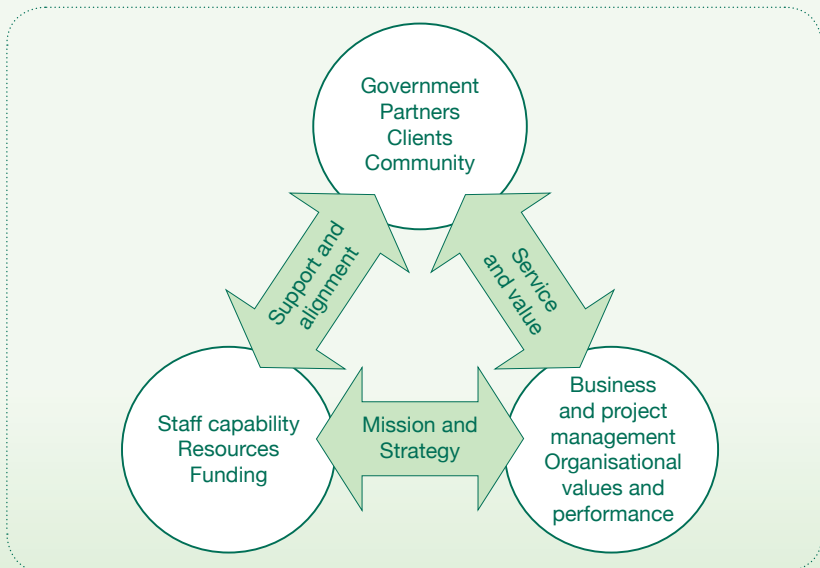
## Monitoring

WTMA will monitor business performance at three primary levels:

- **Outcomes** We will monitor and report on the condition of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area through the annual State of the Wet Tropics Report.
- **Outputs** We will report progress towards achieving the organisational goals specified in this plan in the Authority's annual report. We will use quantitative indicators where these are meaningful and cost effective. Narratives will also provide an important measure of progress.
- **Activities** Project monitoring will provide a basis for reporting against the wide range of activities undertaken to achieve our goals and outcomes.

In addition, WTMA will monitor expenditure against budgets using standards and procedures mandated by the Queensland Government through the Environmental Protection Agency.

Successful implementation of WTMA's strategic plan depends on being clear about the needs and interests of our clients and stakeholders, ensuring we deliver high value services consistent with our mission and values and ensuring we maintain the capability needed to deliver.



# Implementation

## Projects

Projects will be at the core of our business model. Through projects, we will:

- Clearly define our operational objectives and deliverables
- Ensure our work is soundly conceptualised and that delivery is fully planned
- Ensure effective deployment of all WTMA resources to organisational priorities
- Ensure sufficient staff and other resources are matched to project deliverables
- Ensure project leadership and management accountabilities are clear
- Identify and manage risks
- Establish a basis for monitoring implementation progress and evaluating our effectiveness

We will establish teams for each project from across the organisation. Project management and leadership will be determined and clarified according to the nature of the project. Subject to role descriptions, we will allocate people to projects, not projects to people.

We will implement the strategic plan through annual business and budget planning. The business plan will derive information on annual deliverables from previously prepared project plans. WTMA Board approval of the business plan and the associated budget is a key authorising point for the Authority. Because of the link between the annual business plan and budget, the business plan is also the primary point of organisational accountability.

# Implementation

## Organisational arrangements

WTMA staff will be organised into three primary groups comprising staff with related skills and capabilities:

- A **communities and partnerships group**, comprising staff with skills in community engagement, Indigenous community development, partnership development and communications
- A **planning and conservation group**, comprising staff with skills in environmental planning and assessment, permits and regulations, environmental monitoring and reporting, and environmental research
- A **business management group**, comprising staff with skills in business planning, business systems and corporate governance

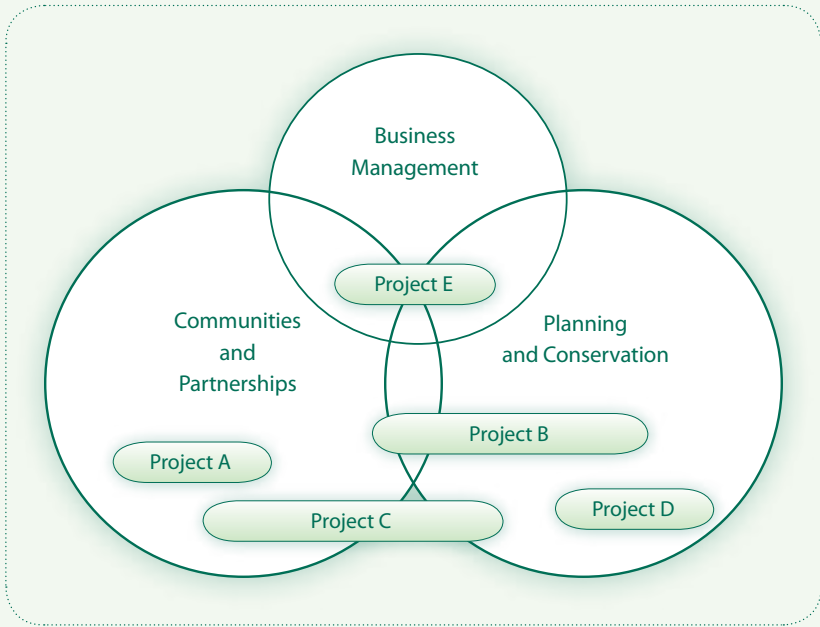
Within these teams, staff will be organised into three broad and overlapping layers:

- A **senior management team** responsible for:
  - strategic management and leadership at a whole-of-organisation level
  - business development and growth
  - identifying and responding to emerging pressures and opportunities
  - supporting project leaders in the delivery of projects
- A cohort of **project leaders** who, under the supervision of the management team, will focus on development and delivery of projects and leadership of project teams
- A group of **project officers** and **administrative staff** who will be assigned to priority projects according to their skills and aspirations



# Our business model

Successful implementation of this approach to organisational structure will depend on the flexibility of staff to move between projects and on the support that WTMA provides to ensure knowledge and skills are continually developing.





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