

## Submission Form

At its 35th session (UNESCO Paris, 2011), the World Heritage Committee (Decision 35COM12D.7) “requested the World Heritage Centre, with the support of the Advisory Bodies, **to develop, for further consideration the proposal** contained in Document WHC-11/35.COM/12D [...] and to further **explore ways of recognising and rewarding best practice through a one-off initiative** at the closing event of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention (November 2012, Japan)...”.

States Parties to the World Heritage Convention are invited to participate in this initiative by proposing World Heritage properties in their country that they regard as an example of successful management and sustainable development.

In order to be eligible the site has to apply with the following criteria:

- The suggested site must be a property inscribed on the World Heritage List;
- Successful management and sustainable development has to be clearly demonstrated;
- Best practices are considered those that are tried, tested and applied in different situations and in a wider context;
- An overall good performance on all headings mentioned in the submission form, with an exemplary performance in at least one of the areas;
- An outstanding example of innovative management in dealing with one or more management challenges / issues that could offer lessons to other sites.

Each State Party may propose a maximum of two properties, preferably relating to one cultural and one natural site.

This form contains 9 topics for demonstrating best management practice – it is not necessary to comply with all of them but it would be appreciated if you could provide a comprehensive response to as many topics as possible. In your responses to the question, please provide all facts and figures to substantiate the answers, and describe the before and after situation of implementing the best practice intervention. The objective is to illustrate clearly why the example can qualify as a best practice and can be used as a source of inspiration for other World Heritage properties.

The topics are based on questions dealt with in the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

## Recognizing and rewarding best practice in management of World Heritage properties

State Party: **Australia**

Title proposed World Heritage property: **Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area**

Brief description of the property: **This area, which stretches along the north-east coast of Australia for some 450 km, is made up largely of tropical rainforests. This biotope offers a particularly extensive and varied array of plants, as well as marsupials and singing birds, along with other rare and endangered animals and plant species. See <http://www.wettropics.gov.au/> for further information.**

<b>Topics for demonstrating best management practice:</b>		<b>Please indicate in this column why your World Heritage property is a best practice in relation to the topic:</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Conservation:</b>  <i>What innovative management practices or strategies are being applied in order to ensure the conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property (e.g. better resource management, restoration and rehabilitation, addressing various man-made or natural threats and challenges, etc.)?</i>	<p>Prior to its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1988, the rainforests of the Wet Tropics were extensively harvested for timber. Listing led to the implementation of Commonwealth regulations that immediately and completely prohibited logging. A substantial investment was made to assist adjustment in timber communities and development of alternative industries, in particular, tourism.</p> <p>With the cessation of the major disturbance of logging, the major threats to the forests of the World Heritage Area are fragmentation, pest and weed invasion, impacts of infrastructure and climate change.</p> <p>The Wet Tropics Management Authority has worked closely with infrastructure agencies to develop innovative approaches to design and construction that aim to accommodate essential infrastructure while minimising impacts. This work has led to the establishment of <a href="#">codes of practice</a> for the water industry, road maintenance and electricity supply. The innovative research and planning work conducted in relation to roads in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has been influential in the development of <a href="#">planning and design</a></p>

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	<p><a href="#">guidelines</a> for application throughout the State of Queensland.</p> <p>The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area provided the focus for the <a href="#">Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy</a> developed for the Area and its surrounding bioregion. The Conservation Strategy effectively mobilised and aligned the efforts of numerous government and community organisations and remains influential in priority setting and resource allocation. It is an example of how the World Heritage Area supports best practice in the wider regional landscape.</p> <p>Close cooperation between management agencies, research organisations and stakeholders has assisted in addressing the threats posed by tropical weeds. A good example of this work is the strategy being implemented to tackle infestations of <a href="#">Miconia calvescens</a> a weed that has had severe impacts on tropical forests elsewhere. Control operations led by Biosecurity Queensland have been supported by research on seed dispersal and control strategies conducted by <a href="#">CSIRO</a>.</p> <p>Climate change remains a serious and insidious threat to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Wet Tropics Management Authority highlighted risks and issues in its 2007/08 <a href="#">Annual Report</a> to the Queensland and Australian Parliaments. A major project (described below in point 4) aimed at improving connectivity and resilience is one important response. The Australian Government's new <a href="#">Clean Energy Future</a> program includes a \$946 million biodiversity fund that will potentially support additional projects in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.</p>
<p><b>2. Local People:</b></p> <p><i>What exemplary practices are you using in order to effectively address the needs of local stakeholders within the</i></p>	<p>Engagement of local communities is a central goal of the management regime for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Wet Tropics Management Authority is a locally-based statutory authority with a board of directors drawn largely from the local community. This ensures the Authority maintains close and extensive networks within the community.</p>

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<p><i>management system for the property, and enable their full and active participation?</i></p>	<p>The Authority supports a community consultative committee CCC comprising stakeholders drawn from a wide cross section of community interests, including Indigenous representatives. The CCC has the role of advising the Authority on issues of concern in the community and the CCC chairperson attends board meetings as an observer ensuring a direct line of communication.</p> <p>The Authority places a very high priority on ensuring Rainforest Aboriginal people have a direct voice in the management of their traditional lands. A variety of engagement methods have been used adapting to shifts in Aboriginal community needs, cultural priorities and capacity. Until recently the Authority supported a Rainforest Aboriginal Advisory Committee that comprised representatives of the 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups and had a similar advisory function to the CCC. Acting on the advice of the RAAC, the Authority is now supporting Aboriginal people in the establishment of an independent entity called the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples's Alliance (RAPA). RAPA represents a further step toward self determination for the Aboriginal community.</p> <p>An overall framework for the involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal people in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is the <a href="#">Wet Tropics Regional Agreement</a> between the Authority, the State and Commonwealth Governments and the 18 tribal groups. This maps out in considerable detail objectives, principles and protocols for engaging Rainforest Aboriginal people. The significance of the Regional Agreement was recognised by the Queensland Premier in the 2005 Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management.</p> <p>The particular importance of engagement with the environmental NGO sector prompted the Authority to establish a Conservation Sector Liaison Group. Chaired by a senior representative of the sector, regular meetings with Authority staff and reports to the Board ensure issues are identified early and the Authority remains well connected with the</p>

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	<p>voluntary environment sector.</p> <p>In a similar vein, the Authority has for many years supported a Tourism Industry Liaison Group, ensuring close and regular dialogue with representatives of this important regional industry. A recent review has led to the creation of a more flexible tourism industry network through which the Authority aims to maintain a direct relationship with all parts of the industry.</p> <p>The Authority has an active program of communication with stakeholders using a variety of media. It has for many years maintained a detailed <a href="#">website</a>. A quarterly <a href="#">email newsletter</a> aims to keep stakeholders informed of issues and developments. <a href="#">Rainforest Aboriginal News</a> is prepared and distributed in hardcopy to help ensure Aboriginal community members are fully informed of developments within the Area. The Authority has recently established a <a href="#">Facebook</a> site and is actively exploring establishment of mobile computer applications in partnership with the tourism industry.</p> <p>The Authority ensures all significant decision making involves structured programs of community engagement. A recent review of the statutory Wet Tropics Management Plan involved three rounds of formal consultation and extensive liaison with community and stakeholder groups to ensure the Plan, as far as possible reflected community interests and aspirations.</p> <p>The Authority also uses community engagement as a means of mobilising and aligning community support for key strategies in support of the World Heritage Area. The approach was used in the development of a conservation strategy for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the surrounding bioregion; and for a nature based tourism strategy and walking track strategy.</p>

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	<p>Recognising the vital importance of community support for the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the Authority conducts the <a href="#">Cassowary Awards</a> each year to celebrate and recognise community achievements related to the Area.</p> <p>In celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of inscription on the World Heritage list in 2008, the Authority recognised the central role of the community in the conservation and management of the Area through publication of <a href="#">From the Heart</a>, which collected stories about the Area from all parts of the regional community.</p> <p>In combination, these measures have helped ensure the Wet Tropics community is well informed of the outstanding universal values of the World Heritage Area, that it has direct access to decision making for the Area and has opportunities to contribute to conservation. Evidence of the success of these arrangements is that a recent <a href="#">community survey</a> indicated very high levels of support for the World Heritage status of the Wet Tropics.</p>
<p><b>3. Legal framework:</b></p> <p><i>What special measures have you taken to ensure that the legal framework for the World Heritage site is effective in maintaining the OUV of the property?</i></p>	<p>The State of Queensland enacted the <i>Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993</i> to underpin the integrated conservation and management of the Area. This provided for the establishment of the statutory Wet Tropics Management Plan 1999 that regulates use and development of the Area. The Plan establishes a zoning system and controls all activities that may have any more than a minor or inconsequential impact on the World Heritage Area. This ensures that activities such as road construction, construction of powerlines and pipelines, construction of dwellings are all subject to regulatory oversight of the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Although it is rarely necessary to apply them, there are strong penalties for offences against the Act.</p> <p>Although the World Heritage Area is not listed for its cultural values, both the Act and the Management Plan recognise the rights of traditional owners of the Area. For example, section 10(5) of the Act requires that the management authority must '<i>have regard to the Aboriginal people particularly concerned with the land...</i>' and that it must, '<i>liaise with and</i></p>

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	<p><i>cooperate with Aboriginal people...'. Section 25 of the Management Plan recognises the particular rights of Native Title holders in the World Heritage Area.</i></p> <p>The Commonwealth of Australia's <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> provides an additional layer of protection for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (along with all other World Heritage properties in Australia). Any action, whether within or outside of the property that may have a significant effect on its values will be subject to the assessment and permitting provisions of the Act.</p> <p>Much of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area comprises National Parks and other protected area tenures managed under the Queensland <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>. This Act is the framework for protected area and wildlife management in Queensland and provides further complementary legislative protections for the World Heritage Area.</p> <p>Other legislation complements the protection and management regime established under State and Commonwealth legislation. Regional planning controls, such as the Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2030 made under the Queensland <i>Sustainable Planning Act 2009</i> explicitly recognises the values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and includes provisions that contribute to protection and conservation.</p> <p>In combination, these Acts and regulations have provided a strong and effective system underpinning protection and management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.</p>
<p><b>4. Boundaries:</b></p> <p><i>What innovative ways of dealing with the boundaries of the property, including for management of the buffer zone do you have in place, to effectively to manage</i></p>	<p>The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area is large, extending over 8940 square kilometres with a boundary of about 3125 km. There are about 2500 parcels of land adjoining the Area. Some of these parcels are forested land managed for conservation, others are freehold or leasehold properties used for grazing, sugar cane, horticulture or for urban purposes.</p>

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<p><i>the site and protect its OUV?</i></p>	<p>The Wet Tropics Management Authority seeks to ensure neighbouring property owners are aware of the significant status of the adjoining World Heritage Area through targeted communications. To assist in sympathetic and sustainable land management, it has published a <a href="#">landholders handbook</a> in partnership with one of the local governments of the region.</p> <p>The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area comprises 14 distinct geographical elements. The Wet Tropics Management Authority with Commonwealth funding assistance is working closely with neighbouring landholders with the objective of maintaining and re-establishing connecting corridors between these elements to promote healthy ecosystem functioning. This work, described <a href="#">here</a>, is an important adaptation response to climate change.</p> <p>There is no formally designated buffer zone for the Area but application of the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> means that any development within, or outside the Area that may have an adverse impact is subject to assessment and permitting. Through this approach, the Act likely protects the Area better than a fixed width buffer zone.</p>
<p><b>5. Sustainable finance:</b></p> <p><i>What effective strategies have you developed and implemented to assure adequate and sustainable financial resources for implementing the management measures required to maintain the site's OUV?</i></p>	<p>Funding for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is provided by the State of Queensland and the Commonwealth of Australia. There is very limited use of private sector funding, or measures such as entry fees to sustain finances for the Area.</p> <p>The Queensland Government provides about A\$1.8 million annually specifically for World Heritage management purposes. This is in addition to approximately A\$8 million annual funding that supports highly complementary management programs for conservation reserves within and adjoining the Area.</p> <p>The Commonwealth provides an annual grant of A\$2.7 million to support the functioning of the Wet Tropics Management Authority. In addition, it funds projects through competitive</p>



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	<p>grant programs for activities such as revegetation and pest and weed management.</p> <p>Queensland also provides substantial funding to agencies with operational responsibility for pest and weed management and supports conservation of the Area through investment in statutory planning systems in the wider landscape.</p> <p>Both the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments provide tourism related funding, mostly through competitive grant programs that supports projects aimed at presentation of the Area.</p> <p>While management agencies will always seek additional resources, these and other funding sources applied in combination ensure that the Outstanding Universal Values of the Area can largely be maintained. The management systems in place in the Area help to ensure available resources are well targeted and that expenditures are effective and accountable.</p>
<p><b>6. Staffing training and development:</b></p> <p><i>What approaches and strategies have you developed and implemented to assure that the human resources are adequate to manage the World Heritage property?</i></p>	<p>The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is managed by the Wet Tropics Management Authority in partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and a number of other agencies.</p> <p>The majority of staff engaged by these agencies hold tertiary or technical qualifications in biological sciences, environmental management and planning, protected area management, communications and other relevant disciplines. Several staff engaged in management of the Area hold doctorates and a substantial proportion hold other post graduate degrees. All relevant agencies support staff training and development programs to ensure skills are maintained.</p>
<p><b>7. Sustainable development:</b></p> <p><i>What are the effective mechanisms in</i></p>	<p>The Queensland Government has recently completed the <a href="#">Far North Queensland Regional Plan</a> that applies to the majority of the Wet Tropics region. This establishes a land use and</p>

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<p><i>place to ensure that resource use permitted in and around the World Heritage site is sustainable and does not impact negatively on OUV?</i></p>	<p>development strategy for the region to apply until 2030. The plan explicitly recognises the values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and includes a number of strategies to support conservation and protection of its values. Subsidiary land use plans to be developed by local government must conform to the regional plan.</p> <p>Development applications under consideration by local government on land adjacent to the World Heritage Area are routinely referred to the Wet Tropics Management Authority for comment and advice. Local government is generally sympathetic to the importance of ensuring protection of the Area and routinely imposes protective conditions on developments. As a consequence of advocacy by the Authority, strict planning controls have been placed on development of hill slopes adjacent to the World Heritage Area as a means of protecting the aesthetic values of the Area – one of its OUVs.</p>
<p><b>8. Education and interpretation programmes:</b></p> <p><i>How do the education, interpretation and awareness programmes you have developed and implemented significantly enhance the understanding of OUV of the site among stakeholders?</i></p>	<p>The Wet Tropics Management Authority developed a package of curriculum materials to assist teachers in the delivery of Wet Tropics themed teaching in schools. Available either on line or as a DVD, <a href="#">Rainforest Explorer</a> is a popular and effective resource for teachers and students. Authority staff regularly attend teacher in-service training and host school visits to the World Heritage Area.</p> <p>Another schools-focussed initiative is an annual <a href="#">poster competition</a>, conducted in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Winning entries are compiled into a calendar that is widely distributed to school communities.</p> <p>The OUV of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is a constant theme in engagement of communities (described above).</p>
<p><b>9. Tourism and interpretation:</b></p> <p><i>What innovative plans have you designed and successfully implemented</i></p>	<p>The Wet Tropics Management Authority works in close partnership with the tourism industry to assist in ensuring visitors to the region enjoy a high quality experience; that their visit enhances their understanding of the OUV of the Wet Tropics and that tourism operations</p>

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<p><i>to ensure that visitor management does not negatively impact on the maintenance of the property's OUV?</i></p>	<p>pose minimal risk to the values of the World Heritage Area.</p> <p>The framework for tourism in the World Heritage Area is established in the <a href="#">Nature Based Tourism Strategy</a>. Developed in close consultation with the tourism industry and relevant government agencies, this strategy maps out a sustainable future for the industry in the Area.</p> <p>A primary strategy for managing the impacts of tourism in the Wet Tropics is to manage and focus access in ways that allow impacts to be managed. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service provides access opportunities in many of the national parks in the region. The recently completed <a href="#">Mamu rainforest canopy walkway</a> is a spectacular example of an opportunity for safe and sustainable access to the World Heritage Area, accompanied by excellent interpretation.</p> <p>The Authority and QPWS in partnership assist a network of visitor information centres in the region by providing information and interpretive materials and staff training.</p> <p>The Wet Tropics Management Authority also partners with private sector operators engaged in rainforest based tourism. The <a href="#">Daintree Discovery Centre</a>, <a href="#">Skyrail Rainforest Cableway</a> and <a href="#">Cooper Creek Wilderness</a> are prominent examples.</p> <p>The regional tourism industry recognises the importance of its reputation for quality and sustainable practice. A high proportion of operators have secured certification for their operations through <a href="#">Ecotourism Australia</a>. Recent <a href="#">Queensland Government Policy Reforms</a> will make accreditation of this type compulsory for commercial operators visiting high visitation sites within the World Heritage Area.</p> <p>The Authority, in partnership with industry is concerned to ensure high standards in the</p>

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	<p>commercial tour guide industry. A Wet Tropics World Heritage specific curriculum for tour guide training is in development at present through a partnership with the <a href="#">Queensland Tourism Industry Council</a>.</p> <p>Other tourism related projects underway at present include a pre-feasibility study for a <a href="#">National World Heritage Gateway</a> that will present the values of the Wet Tropics and other Australian World Heritage properties to visitors; and support for development of greater opportunities for participation of Indigenous communities in the tourism industry.</p> <p>An exciting new development that will assist traditional owners gain economic benefit from the World Heritage Area is underway at <a href="#">Mossman Gorge</a>. This is the most heavily visited site in the Wet Tropics with more than half a million visitors each year. Changes to access will enable the Eastern Kuku Yalanji peoples charge and retain an access fee and provide cultural and environmental interpretation at the site. The new arrangements will also assist in managing visitor pressure reducing impacts on World Heritage values.</p>
<b>Additional comments:</b>	
<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>The Wet Tropics Management Authority maintains close linkages with the research community through support of a scientific advisory committee. Members comprise leading rainforest scientists drawn from James Cook University, CSIRO and other research organisations. The committee helps to ensure Area management staff in all agencies are continually exposed to up-to-date research relevant to the Area and also helps to co-opt the skills and knowledge of the research community. With the support of the scientific advisory committee, the Authority has completed a <a href="#">research strategy</a> that aims to guide research effort and facilitate knowledge transfer.</p> <p>The extraordinary biodiversity of the Wet Tropics attracts considerable research interest generating a very considerable body of knowledge relevant to the Wet Tropics and often, with potential application in rainforest and related ecosystems elsewhere. A '<a href="#">supersite</a>' under Australia's Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN) has been established to capitalise on and extend this research legacy. Several partners in management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area participate in the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, a consortium of</p>	

research and management agencies that aims to facilitate well targeted research and effective knowledge transfer.

### **Capacity Development**

Australia is eager to share the experience it has gained in managing the OUV of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (and other Australian properties) as a means of strengthening World Heritage management elsewhere, in particular in Oceania. During 2009, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Australian Government environment agency hosted a two week [training workshop](#) in support of the East Rennell World Heritage Area (Solomon Islands). Australia has also deployed experienced Wet Tropics management resources to assist the Lorentz World Heritage Area (Republic of Indonesia) in the development of a management plan for the property. During 2011, the Wet Tropics Management Authority hosted officials from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and Vanuatu in support of the completion of their 6-yearly periodic reports.

#### **Brief description/ summary of the best practice, including a statement on how it can be useful for other sites (max.600 words)**

The successful management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area over the past 20 years can be attributed to several inter-related factors that represent best practice. Prominent among these are:

- Design and implementation of a comprehensive property-specific management regime that integrates and coordinates the interests of the State and Commonwealth governments and the role of various land management agencies and entities
- Establishment of a regionally based independent management authority for the Area with statutory roles. This ensures effective regional leadership, a close connection with the regional community and continued advocacy for the Outstanding Universal Values of the Area
- Strong and continuing interest and policy support from successive Commonwealth, State and local governments
- Establishment and implementation of a property-specific regulatory regime for the Area that applies over all tenures within the Area
- A system of complementary legislation and regulation that supports conservation of the Area in the wider landscape
- Sophisticated and well-resourced systems of community engagement for the Area, ensuring that regional communities are aware of its OUV, have a direct and influential say in its management and can contribute to its conservation
- A strong focus on the rights and interests of the Indigenous peoples of the Area with the objective of ensuring their participation contributes to community well-being
- Strong partnerships with the regional tourism industry to ensure high standard of presentation of the Area while ensuring tourism development is sympathetic to the effective protection and conservation of the Area
- An extensive program of management oriented research, building relevant knowledge about the Area and generating information that

has application in other protected Area landscapes

A particular feature of the management regime for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is that the World Heritage status of the property remains a primary driver of management, communications and engagement.

Most importantly, the World Heritage status of the Wet Tropics and its outstanding universal values are widely recognised and supported in the Australian community. This is a result of the communications and engagement efforts of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and other Commonwealth and Queensland Government agencies, with strong support from environmental NGOs. This strong foundation is remarkably important in implementing regulatory frameworks, attracting public investment and ensuring alignment in management of the Area.

While recognising that international differences in culture, legislative system, patterns of land ownership and financing capacity must be taken into account, many of the best-practice aspects of the management regime for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area are transferable. Possibly the most important transferable aspect is that of putting people at the centre of the management system and supporting and empowering their contributions.

**Finally, please provide us, if possible, with up to ten images of the concerned World Heritage property that can be used free of rights in UNESCO publications (commercial and/or non-commercial), and on the UNESCO website. Please provide the name of the photographer and the caption along with the images (he/she will be credited for any use of the images).**