

# AUSTRALIA

## Wet Tropics of Queensland



### II.1 Introduction

**Year of Inscription** 1991

#### Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Environment Australia  
Wet Tropics Management Authority  
Australia

### II.2 Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** N i, ii, iii, iv

#### Statement of Significance

- Appendix 1 of the report updates information on the wording and emphasis of the natural criteria submitted at the time of nomination. The following is an abridged summary:

“As a relict of the Gondwana era 100 million years ago, the site represents a unique record of the mixing of flora and fauna following the collision of the Australian and Asian continental plates about 15 million years ago.

Biotic elements relate to 8 major stages in the earth’s ecological and evolutionary history over the past 415 million years.

The site contains one of the most complete and diverse living records of the major stages in the evolution of land plants.

The site has outstanding features of natural beauty with extensive sweeping forest vistas, wild rivers, waterfalls, rugged gorges, and coastal scenery.

The site contains one of the most important living records of the history of marsupials and songbirds, hundreds of locally endemic species, and provides habitat for 351 and 82 species of rare and threatened plants and animal.”

- Aboriginal occupation is thought to date back to at least 40,000 years ago.

#### Status of Site Boundaries

- The borders and buffer zone of the property are considered adequate.
- No formal revision of the boundary has occurred.

### II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

#### Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- Human impact is considered low compared to other tropical forest regions.
- The majority of the region’s lowland and basalt tableland forest cover has been cleared for agricultural purposes, and large parts of the property have been affected by selective logging.
- Other impacts include incursions by exotic plants, animals and diseases.

### II.4 Management

#### Administrative and Management Arrangements

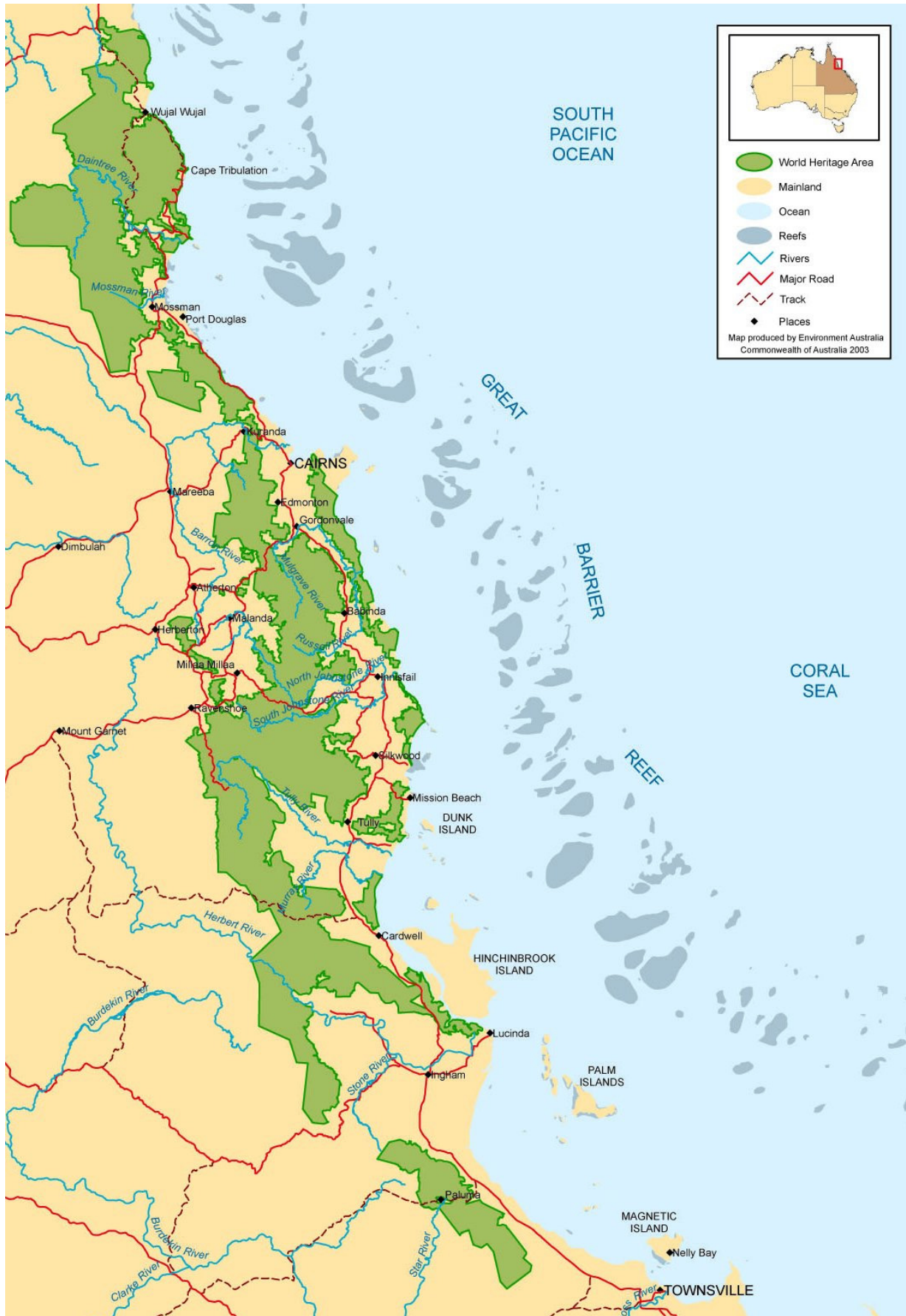
- The Commonwealth Wet Tropics of Queensland WH Area Conservation Act (1994) gives effect to the 1990 State-Commonwealth WH Area Management Scheme.

- Other important legislation includes the: the Wet Tropics WH Protection & Management Act (1993); Wet Tropics Management Plan (1998); Vegetation Management Act (1999); EPBC (1999, as above); and Vegetation Management Regulation (2000).

- The Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service operates under the Nature Conservation Act (1992).
- The property boundaries fall within 14 responsible local government jurisdictions.
- The non-statutory ‘FNQ 2010’ is a co-operative regional planning process involving Commonwealth, State and Local governments.
- The Wet Tropics Authority has released a ‘Nature-Based Tourism Strategy’ (2000), ‘Natural Resource Management Plan’ (2002). A ‘Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy’ will be completed in 2003.
- 80% of the property is potentially claimable under the Native Title Act (1993). 16 native title claims have been logged with the National Native Title Tribunal concerning land in the WH Area.

*“Rainforest aboriginal people have indicated that they wish to have the property recognized as a living cultural landscape.”*

# State of Conservation of the World Heritage Properties in the Asia-Pacific Region



Map of the Wet Tropic Forests of Queensland showing WH Area (in green)

### Present State of Conservation

- The WH value is considered to have been maintained.

### Staffing and Training Needs

- The Wet Tropics Authority has 30 permanent staff.
- In-house training is provided in workforce diversity, cross-cultural awareness, and GIS technical skills.

### Financial Situation

- Commonwealth and Queensland government funding amounted to US\$7.43 million for 2000-01.
- Expenditure for staff training was US\$50,000 in 2000-02.
- Financial resources are considered as limited.
- \* International Assistance from WHF: none.

### Access to IT

- IT facilities are considered adequate.

### Visitor Management

- The annual number of visitors to the region increased from 840,000 in 1985 to around 2 million in 1995. The figure is predicted to double by 2016.
- The Authority has established a 'Tourism Industry Liaison Group' with representatives drawn from regional tourism associations.

## II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

### Threats and Risks

- Extreme sensitivity to climate change (cyclones, floods & droughts),
- Pressure on endemic & spatially restricted species,
- Regional population growth,
- Agricultural expansion & land clearance,
- Altered drainage patterns,
- Environmental pests,
- Habitat fragmentation from construction/roads,
- Dams & weirs as aquatic/terrestrial habitat modifiers,
- Fire hazards,
- Virulent outbreaks of forest dieback.

### Counteractive Plans

- Environmental restoration activities include: strategic tree planting, re-establishing wildlife corridors, the rehabilitation of degraded road verges, and the decommissioning of obsolete infrastructure.
- The Rainforest CRC has several projects examining a range of freshwater management issues, integrated research on dieback outbreaks, and has developed a 'Wet Tropics Vertebrate Pest Risk Assessment Scheme'.
- The Wet Tropics Authority actively participates in the FNQ 2010 regional water infrastructure planning processes to ensure WH interests, and is developing a weed 'Risk Assessment System'.

- The Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service drafted a state-wide fire policy in mid-2000.
- The Wet Tropics Authority has commissioned a water infrastructure environmental code of practice, and facilitated the 'Queensland Electricity Supply Industry Environmental Code of Practice'.

## II.6 Monitoring

### Monitoring Arrangements

- The 'State of the Wet Tropics' report is now a statutory requirement under the WH Wet Tropics Management Act (1993).
- The ACIUCN Reactive Monitoring Reports identified the following priorities: (i) support site management; (ii) monitor the management of native and introduced species; and (iii) ensure complementary management of land use and human impacts.
- At the site level, the Authority is currently testing a visitor monitoring system in collaboration with the Rainforest CRC.
- Other monitoring arrangements include community, landholder and neighbour surveys.

### Monitoring Indicators

- Major indicator studies cover: (i) vegetation mapping programmes; (ii) environmental impact studies; and (iii) mapping of patches of rainforest dieback.

## II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

### Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- Knowledge of the site's significance has increased markedly since WH listing, and a statutory management plan for the property is now in place.
- Native title and indigenous land use negotiations will continue to emerge as a major area of management focus with 80% of the property potentially claimable under the Native Title Act (1993).
- Rainforest Aboriginal people have indicated they wish to have the property recognized as a living cultural landscape.
- The completed 'Wet Tropics Management Plan' identifies priority management strategies. However, specific environment management plans need to be developed as an additional condition of some permits to allow more explicit compliance monitoring.
- The Authority's long-term regional vegetation and geology mapping project is due for completion in 2004.
- The establishment of an 'Australian Tropical Forest Institute' (ATFI) is also accorded high priority.

### \* State of Conservation Reports

1991 WHC-CONF.202/4 The Bureau noted that although a management agency had been set up, no additional funds for field activities had been provided. The Bureau was also concerned about the pace of tourism development & the potential impact of a proposed hydropower development project.

1992 WHC-CONF.203/3 The Bureau was informed that a site visit had been undertaken by IUCN who would submit an up-dated state of conservation report.

1998 WHC-CONF.201/3b A letter from The Wilderness Society signed on behalf of 13 Australian conservation groups, addressed to the Chairperson, was received by WHC concerning threats within & adjacent to WTQ.

1998 WHC-CONF.202/4 The Ext. Bureau learned that the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment had determined that clearing of vegetation that may have occurred within this property did not place the WH value of the site at risk.

1998 WHC-CONF.203/8rev The Committee was informed that the arrangements for the management of this site met with the full confidence of the Government of Australia. The Management Plan, effective as of 1 September 1998, had been prepared with the full involvement of all stakeholders, including Aboriginal groups, and provided the WTMA with a full suite of powers to act in the interests of the WH property.

1999 WHC- CONF.204/5 IUCN informed WHC that central to the conservation of the site would be the effectiveness of the implementation of the management plan to mitigate impacts of invasive species, water extraction, tourism development & Aboriginal involvement.

1999 WHC-CONF.209/14 The Committee urged the State Party & IUCN to finalise the consultation process for an up-to-date state of conservation report for WTQ.

2000 WHC-CONF.204/10 In September 2000, ACIUCN completed its report 'Condition, Management and Threats' on the Wet Tropics of Queensland WHA in close co-operation with the State Party. As in the case of the Great Barrier Reef & Shark Bay, ACIUCN undertook a cluster analysis of 19 recommendations in consultation with the members of a working group which identified 4 "Focused Recommendations": 1. Support for management of the WTQ WHA; 2. Management of native & introduced species; 3. Management of land use and human impacts within & beyond the boundaries of the WHA; 4. Strategic issues for future management. ACIUCN recommended adequate resources to fully implement the WT Management Plan & Strategic Plan 1998-2003, and reiterated a call to reject proposals to construct the Tully Millstream Dam or to extend the electricity grid north of the Daintree river (subject to review when the 'Daintree Futures Study' is finalised). ACIUCN also recommended: (a) increased indigenous involvement in management; (b) re-nomination of the area for its cultural values; and (c) at least 1 member of the Board of the WTMA to be a person recognised as an expert by the conservation movement.

2001 WHC-CONF.205/5 In a letter dated April 2001, the State Party transmitted to WHC its response to the priority action areas described in ACIUCN report, which were transmitted to IUCN for review.