



Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Qld Section) – Communiqué

16 December 2025



The Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Qld section) acknowledges and respects the strong connections that First Nations peoples have with the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area.

The Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Queensland Section) (the Committee) held its sixth meeting from 25-26 November 2025. The first day was held on the Country of Yugambeh people, at David Fleay Wildlife Park, Burleigh Heads and the second day on the Country of Turrbal and Jagera peoples, at 400 George St Brisbane. The role of the Committee is to provide advice to the State and Commonwealth Government on matters relating to the identification, protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage of the Queensland section of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area (hereafter Gondwana Rainforests WHA) from First Nations, scientific and community perspectives. The Committee comprises an independent Chair and 16 members. Apologies were received from three members, two of whom provided proxies.

Thank you to the Minister

The Committee was pleased to meet with the Honourable Andrew Powell, Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation, and the DETSI Deputy-General Mr Ben Klassen. This invaluable occasion allowed for meaningful discussion of the management challenges posed by climate change and the proposed Springbrook cableway. The Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, which was warmly welcomed by the Committee. The Minister explained that the City of Gold Coast holds responsibility for progressing the proposed Springbrook cableway, which the government continues to support in principle, noting the success of the Kuranda Skyrail. Everyone in the room contributed to a productive exchange about the potential of nature-based theme parks to promote tourism, Gondwana Rainforests WHA, and understanding of Queensland's other priceless WHAs—offering a "World Heritage World" alongside Dreamworld, Movie World, Sea World and the other popular destinations. First Nations members and the Minister discussed the exceptional value of cultural practices and the importance of Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers in managing Country in Gondwana Rainforests WHA.

Tourism

The Committee greatly benefited from the visit to the David Fleay Wildlife Park and the presentation from Ms Kirstin Kenyon, Executive Director, Wildlife and Threatened Species, Mr Steve Briant, Director, and Ms Jenny Collins, Manager, Gateway Visitor Centres, from QPWS&P, about the Gateway Visitor Centre Strategy and the Concept Master Plan for the David Fleay Wildlife Park. The walk through the proposed interpretative installations highlighting K'gari, Riversleigh, Wet Tropics and Gondwana Rainforests WHA was very instructive. We appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on important aspects of the proposed interpretation, including the significant features, values, stories, and ways to foster connection with and a sense of wonder about Gondwana Rainforests WHA. The Committee commended the work of the David Fleay Wildlife Park in promoting greater appreciation of World Heritage and noted the success of its enhanced efforts in weed control.

Springbrook Groundwater

The Committee received a presentation from Dr Lucy Reading, Associate Professor at the Queensland University of Technology, about the outcomes of the Springbrook Groundwater Investigation. The study found that strong hydrological links exist between aquifers, streams and ecosystems and that rainforest species are groundwater dependent. The Committee noted the importance of the monitoring network established through the project and resolved to support the application for funding from the Australian Heritage Grants to continue the work through the “Sustaining Gondwana Rainforest: Integrated Environmental Monitoring” project.

The Committee noted the importance of the draft Gold Coast water plan to ongoing management of the Springbrook groundwater and resolved to provide a submission requesting that groundwater extraction be phased out.

Climate Change

The Committee received a briefing from Dr Claire Mason (University of Tasmania) about the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) project that, in collaboration with the DETSI World Heritage Unit, is developing a Climate Adaptation Plan for Gondwana Rainforests WHA (Qld section only). The First Nations members and proxies spoke to the Committee about how worthwhile they found engagement with the NESP project, including attendance at the national conference *Climate Adaptation 2025* from 23-25 July 2025. The Committee commended the project team on its co-design work with relevant government agencies and First Nations and noted how this had resulted in attention to attributes of importance to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Gondwana Rainforests WHA. The Committee looks forward to continuing to provide advice to the project, including through receiving briefings from the First Nations members of the project team.

Committee Working Groups

The Committee has three Working Groups (WGs). The Navigating Change WG, in collaboration with DETSI staff continues its focus on identifying the protection mechanisms that support landscape connectivity. It is also preparing the submission to the draft Gold Coast Water Plan. The Tourism WG, in collaboration with QPWS&P staff, is focusing on obtaining better information on the visitation to several Parks, through collecting data from smart phones. The First Nations WG welcomed the news that Danggan Balun Aboriginal Corporation was successful in its application on behalf of Yugambeh people for Indigenous Rangers and noted the recent letter of support from the Committee for the Geynyan Aboriginal Corporation’s application for Rangers.

Reporting

The Committee received very useful reports from staff of QPWS&P, DETSI and DCCEEW. The reports from both DCCEEW and DETSI noted that the Gondwana Rainforests WHA was rated as “significant concern” in the IUCN World Heritage Outlook Report 2025. Climate change, high levels of visitation, pathogens, pests and bush fires are key threats. The DETSI report highlighted that the IUCN World Heritage Outlook rated the Wet Tropics WHA as “significant concern”, the Great Barrier Reef WHA as “critical”, and Riversleigh as “good with some concerns”. Key actions to respond to threats include a commitment of additional funding to the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program in the Wet Tropics WHA, and ongoing support for Water Quality Improvement in the Great Barrier Reef WHA. The QPWS&P reported on management activities in relation to fire, invasive weeds, feral animals and surveys of threatened species. The draft Management Plan for Main Range National Park will be released in early 2026, and management planning activities have commenced for Springbrook, Lamington and Mt Barney National Parks. Planning and design of major capital projects for upgraded visitor facilities at Springbrook and Lamington National Parks are underway.

The Committee thanks the public servants for the high levels of collaboration, information sharing, secretarial and logistic support, and overall professionalism displayed in supporting this meeting.