



Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee

(Qld Section) – Communiqué

30 June 2026



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 seventh, and final meeting of its term (2023-26), from 16-18 June 2026. The meeting was held on the Country of the Bunya Peoples, at the Bunya Peoples' Aboriginal Corporation (BPAC) Bunya Mountains Ranger Base. The meeting was preceded by an informative on Country tour within the National Park as well as a visit to the Bush University. The Bush University, completed by BPAC in 2022, is an ancient gathering place and place of learning and connection for all people, where traditional culture is nurtured and traditional practices are shared and preserved.

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 four members, one of whom provided a proxy.

The remainder of this Communiqué summarises the advice provided by the Committee during its Three-Year term and concludes with our priority recommendations.

Priority challenges and solutions of the Committee's

The Committee began its term by formulating a Three-Year Plan to support the Australian and Queensland governments' obligations under the World Heritage Convention, examining key values and threats, and analysing any gaps in current management of Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area (Queensland section, hereafter Gondwana RAWHA). As a result, three Working Groups were formed to progress the Committee's agreed priority elements of the plan: Navigating Change, First Nations and Tourism.

Three project proposals were identified and developed by the WGs in collaboration with DETSI staff: landscape connectivity; tourism data collection; and QPWS Ranger training focussed on World Heritage values in the Gondwana RWAH. The Committee advises that the limited funding needed to deliver these projects would target key leverage points and can influence significant system change.

The Committee considered the importance of tourism throughout its term and advises that investment in a Gondwana Cultural and Natural Heritage Gateway offers an opportunity to promote the region and its values in the context of the Brisbane Olympics in 2032. It is an attractive alternative to the Springbrook Cableway which will have clearly unacceptable impacts on the Gondwana RWAH.

Achievements of the Committee

The Committee held seven face-to-face meetings and each Working Group met up to six times over the duration of the term (July 2023-26). Committee members participated in field trips to Lamington National Park, Springbrook National Park, Tamborine Mountain, David Fleay Wildlife Park and the Bunya Mountains. First Nations' knowledge was embedded in the Committee's work through yarning circles at the start of each meeting, and on-Country field trips and discussions. The Committee's Three-Year Plan prioritised climate change, visitation pressure and opportunities, First Nations caring for Country, landscape connectivity disruption and ecological threats to the property, as areas requiring further response.

The Committee regularly provided advice and guidance in relation to these and other issues.

Climate Change:

- Participated in the DETSI-led Climate Adaptation Project (Stage one – funded by an Australian Heritage Grant).
- Briefed the Minister and DETSI staff on heightened risks from climate change.
- Disseminated climate change challenges and solutions through conference participation, and through the Chair's role leading the Climate Working Group of the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee.

First Nations Caring for Country:

- Supported the DETSI-led Cultural Values project (funded by an Australian Heritage Grant), with First Nations committee members contributing to delivery of this project.
- Supported cultural exchanges and presentations by First Nations groups and committee members at conferences, forums and workshops.
- Supported First Nations applications for leadership and program funding.

Landscape connectivity and ecological threats:

- Highlighted key challenges including techniques to identify biota that contribute to OUV, compliance action on illegal activities, fire management, and monitoring across Gondwana RWAH and its broader connected landscapes.
- Conducted an audit of the current monitoring related to OUV in the Gondwana RWAH and identified gaps.

- Communicated mapping and monitoring approaches that identify plants with origins in the deep past, vital for the OUV, and provide enhanced understanding and monitoring of Gondwana RAWHA.
- Developed a typology linking governance type (e.g. local, state, national, Indigenous) to the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) mechanisms for protection of landscape connectivity across stewardship, restoration, incentives, area-based management, legal, policy and planning instruments, and proposed a project to review and test the typology.
- Worked with DETSI staff to prepare a project proposal for training of Rangers in relation to World Heritage values in Gondwana RWHA.
- Provided advice on the future development of the Springbrook Groundwater Investigation.
- Contributed to the Gold Coast Water Plan consultation.

Visitor opportunities and impacts:

- Contributed to Destination 2045 and Springbrook Eaglemont Estate Masterplan consultation.
- Communicated the unacceptable impacts of the proposed Springbrook Cableway.
- Proposed investment in a natural and cultural heritage gateway centre as an alternative to the cableway that would provide sustainable visitor experience hub for Gondwana RWHA.
- Provided input to DETSI's Gateway Visitor Centre Strategy and communicated the benefits of the multiple "World Heritage Worlds" interpretation centre for the David Fleay Wildlife Park to the Minister and departmental staff.
- Worked with DETSI staff to identify gaps in visitor information that are hampering current efforts to improve visitor opportunities and developed a project proposal to fill those gaps.
- Contributed planning advice and concept design to a DETSI-led project to improve World Heritage branding across the property.

Other issues:

- Provided input to the IUCN World Heritage Outlook (2025) which retained the rating of the Gondwana RAWHA as "significant concern".
- Presented at several international and national conferences and forums, profiling the World Heritage property and associated challenges and solutions.
- Developed a stakeholder engagement framework and cultural competency initiatives.
- Participated, where relevant, in workshops and meetings to contribute to departmentally led processes and projects.

Outcomes for obligations under the World Heritage Convention

Identifying: Spatially explicit identification of places with Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) has been strengthened by the Committee's focus on plants with origins in the deep past and by integration of protection of cultural values through First Nations-led caring for Country.

Protecting: Many issues from the frontline of conservation where Committee members work with scientists, developers, community organisations, rangers, and other on-ground managers have been brought to the fore. A toolkit of responses to pernicious, landscape-wide threats has been provided by the typology of mechanisms to protect landscape connectivity, and the Climate Adaptation Project.

Conserving: Linking of diverse monitoring activities, including groundwater, to the OUV has strengthened our capacity to measure key variables in conservation outcomes (e.g. evolutionary significance, integrity). The First Nations committee members' contributions and support for First Nations-QPWS&P partnerships have enhanced inclusion of cultural knowledge and practices into conservation.

Presentation: The profile of Gondwana RAWHA among the stakeholder networks of the Committee members has been elevated through newsletter articles, discussions, presentations at conferences and forums, dissemination of the Communiques, and identification of opportunities for enhancing visitor experiences. Significant learning among the members and with departmental staff has improved our ability to communicate the challenges and solutions for Gondwana RAWHA with stakeholders and the broader public. Guidance and leadership from the Chair expedited these outcomes.

Transmission to future generations: Participation of First Nations members enhanced the shared understanding of the profound living legacy of generations of their stewardship. First Nations groups have secured some funding to continue their stewardship activities that embed First Nations knowledge and management enabling transmission to future generations.

Rehabilitation: Committee members increased their knowledge of habitat restoration techniques and were able to apply these lessons in several on-ground projects in which they were involved.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends:

- Continuing the strong involvement of Githabul, Yugambeh, Yuggera Ugarapul First Nations members, which has greatly enhanced the role of the Gondwana RAWHA in the life of the community.
- Providing and/or leveraging funds for the three priority projects related to landscape connectivity, tourism data collection, and Ranger training, developed by the Committee together with DETSI staff.
- Investing in a Gondwana Cultural and Natural Heritage Gateway to promote the region and its values in the context of the Brisbane Olympics in 2032, and as an alternative to the proposed Springbrook Cableway which will have clearly unacceptable impacts on the Gondwana RAWHA.
- Elevating vigilance in Australia's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and manage for resilience in the Gondwana RAWHA, in the face of extreme and rising risks from climate change.

The Committee looks forward to the appointment of the next term of the Committee to continue and build upon the important partnerships developed over this term.