Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Qld Section)

Terms of Reference

Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage area (Qld Section)

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 16 November 1972. The World Heritage Convention promotes cooperation among nations, to identify and protect heritage that is of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and ensure its conservation for current and future generations.

In August 1974, Australia ratified the World Heritage Convention. The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia (Gondwana) was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1988, with extensions to the property added in 1992, to acknowledge its natural heritage of outstanding universal value. It exhibits outstanding examples of major stages of Earth's evolutionary history, ongoing geological and biological processes and exceptional biological diversity. A wide range of plant and animal lineages and communities with ancient origins in Gondwana survive in this collection of reserves. The Gondwana Rainforests also provides principal habitat for many threatened species of plants and animals.

Gondwana also has important cultural significance with approximately 14 different First Nations groups having active cultural connections to the area. The Australian, New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland governments acknowledge that the OUV of the Gondwana Rainforests have been managed sustainably by First Nations peoples for many generations.

Gondwana is a serial property comprising the major remaining areas of rainforest in southeast Queensland and North East NSW. It currently includes parts of 41 protected areas located largely on the Great Dividing Range and eastern escarpment, extending from Main Range National Park in southeast Queensland to Barrington Tops National Park in northeast NSW. The Queensland section of the property includes Springbrook National Park, Lamington National Park, Mt Barney National Park, Mt Chinghee National Park and Main Range National Park.

Management and protection of the World Heritage property is carried out under the provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the *Recreation Area Management Act 2006* and the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014*. Australia's World Heritage properties are protected under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). World Heritage properties are recognised as a Matter of National Environmental Significance under the EPBC Act's assessment and approval provisions.

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) plays a critical role in assisting the Australian Government in meeting Australia's obligations to manage and protect the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage area (Qld Section). The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Queensland section of the property. They also have cooperative arrangements in place with NSW National Parks and

Wildlife Service (NPWS) including a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which enables coordinated on-ground management between jurisdictions. The DETSI World Heritage Unit provides World Heritage policy, strategic direction and secretariat support to the advisory committee. Activities occur in consultation with the First Nations peoples of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage area (Qld Section).

Purpose of the Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Qld Section)

The purpose of Queensland's Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (the Committee) is to provide advice to State and Australian Government Ministers and management agencies responsible for World Heritage to ensure that Australia continues to meet its obligations under the World Heritage Convention to protect, conserve and present this World Heritage property.

The Committee may provide advice on the review and implementation of plans and strategies, research needs or management activities. This advice is to be communicated to the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage in the form of:

- a communique prepared after each meeting of the Committee; and
- written communication from the Chair on behalf of the Committee as required.

Only the Chair has the authority to make public statements on behalf of the Committee.

Scope and responsibility of the Committee

The Committee's primary focus is the provision of advice that encompasses a broad range of opinion based on evidence, experience and understanding of the issues that may impact on the management and protection of the Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage property.

The operational management and protection of the World Heritage property is carried out under the provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and is the responsibility of DETSI.

In developing and providing advice, the Committee may consider relevant plans, strategies and management issues which are the responsibility of DETSI or any agency.

Four-year plan and stakeholder engagement framework

The Committee will provide input and advice into a four-year plan and stakeholder engagement framework. These documents, developed by DETSI, aim to focus Committee discussions, information gathering and exchanges external to the Committee. The plan and the framework will strengthen analysis of issues while framing member advice.

In relation to stakeholder engagement, members are encouraged to provide and seek information from their relevant sectors of representation on Gondwana World Heritage issues. At times there may be a conflict between providing information to the community and respecting the confidentiality of some of the information provided to the Committee. It is the responsibility of members to identify such conflicts and seek direction, either during Committee meetings or through the Chair and/or DETSI Sponsor. Where clarity is required, the Chair should liaise directly with the DETSI Sponsor.

Membership

Membership of the Committee is to support its purpose to provide advice on the management and protection of this World Heritage property's OUV. Membership will comprise First Nations peoples, scientific and community interests and expertise relevant to the management of Gondwana Rainforests.

Member interest and expertise will broadly be reflected by up to **17 representatives** as follows:

- The Chair is an independent, non-government person, with no current direct financial or vested political interest in the way in which Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage area is managed.
- Two Yugambeh People
- Two Yuggera Ugarapul People
- Two Githabul People
- Up to five members with community interest/expertise, including representatives of the following sectors:
    - Tourism
    - Recreation
    - Residential
    - Conservation
    - Natural resource management
    - Local government.
- Up to five members with scientific expertise for example in relation to:
    - Botany
    - Zoology
    - General ecology
    - Geomorphology
    - Cultural heritage/archaeology/anthropology
    - Stewardship and governance of social-ecological systems
    - Sustainable tourism / visitor management
    - Protected area management / biosecurity
    - Implementation of the operational guidelines
    - Social science
    - Climate/climate change.
- First Nations people is not limited to specific First Nations positions.

Gender balance

The Committee is to consist of at least 50 percent women.

Appointment of Chair and Members

Chair

The Chair will be selected:

a) after a publicly advertised expressions of interest process;
b) a mandatory search of the Queensland Register of Nominees; and
c) with the agreement of both the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

The Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage will communicate the Chair's selection via a letter of appointment.

The Queensland Minister, with the agreement of the Australian Government Minister responsible for World Heritage, may appoint an acting chair in the event of an unforeseen vacancy in the role of chair (without meeting a) and b) requirements).

Members

The members will be selected:

a) after a publicly advertised expressions of interest process;
b) a mandatory search of the Queensland Register of Nominees; and
c) at the discretion of the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Committee members are appointed by the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage via a letter of appointment.

Term of Appointment

The Committee term is four-years with 50 per cent of the Committee members appointed for two-years and 50 per cent appointed for four-year terms, commencing from the date advised in the letter of appointment.

Future committee appointments will be for four-year terms.

The proposed actions enable:

- the staggering of future Committee appointments to recruit new and diverse membership engaged in current World Heritage related projects, research and activities;
- appointment of new members while ensuring continuity of committee expertise;
- continuity for key projects prioritised by each committee; and
- reduced risk of a lapse in committee membership between terms.

The Chair and Committee members are limited to no more than two (2) consecutive terms of appointment.

The Chair and Committee members may resign at any time and remain eligible for reappointment in another term.

Termination of Appointment

Termination of the Chair shall be by agreement of both the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage

Other than by resignation or lapse of membership, termination of membership of the Committee shall be by the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Grounds for termination of appointment may include:

a) Unauthorised representation of the Committee.
b) Misconduct and inappropriate behaviour.
c) Misuse of any information provided in confidence for the operation, deliberation and decision-making process of the Committee.
d) Breach of confidentially or of the Code of Conduct[1.]
e) Other reason at the discretion of the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Duties and functions

Chair responsibilities:

a) Chair meetings in accordance with formal meeting protocols with support from the secretariat.
b) Work closely with the DETSI Sponsor to develop agendas, approve meeting notes, and identify follow up actions.
c) Facilitate discussion on agenda items, allow for the range of committee views to be heard and acknowledged, and coordinate advice to DETSI and Ministers.
d) Facilitate participation of all Committee members in the meeting and encourage members to share and exchange information with each other and the DETSI internal representatives.
e) Maintain adherence to the Code of Conduct[1] at meetings.
f) Speak on behalf of the Committee.
g) Present the Committee's advice via a Communique to the Ministers within two weeks of each meeting.
h) Represent (or proxy) Gondwana on the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC), which will consider national and cross-cutting issues relevant to all World Heritage properties in Australia.

Note 1: Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service

Committee Member responsibilities:

a) Attend and participate in Committee meetings and discussions.
b) Direct their expertise and experience towards advancing the views of their respective sector or community interest and provide appropriate advice in relation to the management of the Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage Area.
c) Provide up-to-date advice at meetings when requested on issues identified on the agenda.
d) Work cooperatively with other Committee members, recognising and respecting the diverse views within the Committee. on issues discussed where possible.
e) Convey outcomes from the Committee meetings to their respective sector(s) and/or stakeholder group as appropriate.
f) Follow up on Committee actions appropriately.
g) Behave professionally, adhere to the Code of Conduct, maintain confidentiality and declare any perceived or actual conflicts of interest.
h) Defer to the Chair, as the only authorised spokesperson, on issues concerning the operations, deliberations and decisions of the Committee.

Conflicts of Interest

The independence of the Committee Chair is an inherent requirement of the role. The Chair must have no current direct financial or vested political interest in the way Gondwana Rainforests is managed.

Committee members who have or acquire direct or indirect personal or pecuniary interest in a matter decided or under consideration by the Committee must:

- as soon as reasonably practicable and prior to the Committee meeting, disclose to DETSI full and accurate details of the interest;
- not take part in any discussion by the Committee relating to the matter;
- be absent from the room when any such discussion or voting is taking place;
- not have access to information of the Committee in relation to the matter in which there is an identified conflict;

- not seek, directly or indirectly, to influence the outcome of any deliberations by the Committee or any of its members in relation to any matter to which he or she may have a conflict; and
- disclose interests in contracts with the Committee and potential conflicts arising from offices or property held by the member or his/her family members.

Disclosure of this information should be recorded in the minutes of the Committee meeting and reported to the Minister as soon as possible after the meeting. If there is any doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, the relevant member should err on the side of caution and declare the interest and excuse himself or herself from the room when any discussion or voting is taking place on the particular issue that is the subject of the conflict.

Meetings

Meeting Attendance

Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that members will attach a priority to attending and participating in Committee meetings. It is also expected that members will allocate appropriate preparation time for the reading of agenda papers and responding to issues where the Committee's advice is sought.

If a Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, they may seek approval from the Chair for a proxy to represent their interests at the meeting. This request should be in writing (email) and should explain the reasons for non-attendance and identify their preferred proxy. The Chair and DETSI Sponsor are responsible for meeting together to approve any proxies.

Membership on the Committee may lapse if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without valid reasons communicated to the Chair and DETSI Sponsor.

If the Chair is not present at a Committee meeting, the members present will elect one of their members to preside at the meeting.

All out-of-pocket travel expenses incurred by Committee members to attend meetings is reimbursed. In recognition of the additional workload required of the Chair, a payment is made per meeting. All reimbursements and payments are made in accordance with the *Remuneration procedures for part-time chairs and members of Queensland government bodies*.- *https://www.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/39481/remuneration-procedures.pdf*

Time and place of meetings

Committee meetings will be a mixture of in-person and online meetings. Depending on budget, there will be an attempt to hold at least one "on-Country" meeting near or at the property each year.

Any agreed in-person meetings may be held in Brisbane.

An indicative, annual schedule of meetings will be made available at the first meeting of the Committee each year with specific dates and times decided in consultation with the Chair and members of the Committee.

Quorum

A quorum for a meeting shall be a simple majority of members, including at least two members with First Nations cultural expertise.

Attendance of guests at Committee meetings

Local, Queensland and Australian Government representatives may attend meetings with the agreement of the Chair. The Executive Officer (secretariat) will provide administrative and technical support for and at each of the Committee meetings. Other guests may be invited to attend and to provide advice at (at their own cost unless otherwise approved by DETSI Sponsor).

Secretariat Support

DETSI will provide secretariat support to the Committee.

Executive Officer responsibilities

- Coordinate Committee meeting logistics and provide administrative support, including booking travel and accommodation, processing of payments and reimbursements, disseminating information to members and other relevant stakeholders.
- Take direction from the DETSI Sponsor and Chair to develop agendas, schedule meetings, prepare and distribute meeting papers and assist in the implementation of actions where necessary.
- Organise the booking and set up of meeting rooms, work closely with the Chair during all meetings to ensure proceedings align with the agenda, and accurate minutes and actions are recorded.
- Assist the Chair and Committee to operate in accordance with the principles and requirements of legislation, policies, strategies, and guidelines appropriate to the Gondwana World Heritage Area.
- Assist the Committee to maintain a focus on meeting the Terms of Reference.

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