

RESEARCH

Project 7.1

Project 7.3

Project 7.4

PROJECT 7.2**Indigenous Cultural Values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area***Project Leader: Mr Paul Durante (NQLC)*

In 1988, the Wet Tropics of North Queensland was placed on the World Heritage List in recognition of its outstanding natural values. The nomination briefly mentioned Aboriginal rainforest culture, but the cultural values of the Wet Tropics (either Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) were not considered in the listing process. Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has focused almost entirely on the nominated natural values, sometimes to the detriment of the area's cultural values.

The re-nomination of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area for its cultural values constitutes one of the key recommendations to emerge from the Review of Aboriginal Involvement in the Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (1998). According to the Review, re-nomination will ensure better protection of Aboriginal cultural values, increase Indigenous involvement in the management of the area, and provide economic benefits for Aboriginal people.

To progress the re-nomination process the Rainforest CRC, in conjunction with the North Queensland Land Council, has developed and funded a two-phase project aimed at identifying the Aboriginal cultural values of the WTWHA. The first stage of the project, compiling existing, written information about the cultural significance of the Wet Tropics WHA, was undertaken by Dr Nicky Horsfall, with assistance from Hilton Noble. This part of the project also included invaluable contributions from many Rainforest Aboriginal groups, as well as from archaeologists and anthropologists who have done research in the region. The report prepared by Dr Horsfall can be seen as the first stage towards a re-nomination document, by identifying key points of potential 'outstanding universal value' and noting where further research could enhance the chances of a successful re-listing.

The second phase of the project involves the preparation of a document which focuses upon contemporary expressions of Indigenous cultural values in the Wet Tropics WHA. Together, these two reports will form a Statement of the Aboriginal Cultural Values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Statement will constitute the foundation documentation supporting the proposed re-nomination of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.