

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance Steering Group

1. Introduction and purpose

The Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance (the Alliance) is a coalition of organisations and individuals with the shared goal of ensuring the survival of the Wet Tropics of Queensland forests amidst this changing and unstable climate. Our aim is to upscale restoration in the region whilst supporting a resilient green economy to protect the region's natural assets. Some key objectives of the Alliance are to:

- foster knowledge sharing, capacity building, and networking
- include First Nations peoples, strategies and knowledge
- help coordinate efforts to protect, connect, and restore healthy landscapes
- recognise and support different restoration methods that may suit different people and purposes in different environments
- identify and collectively address knowledge gaps in restoration science
- raise awareness with new investment opportunities (including new markets).

The Alliance was formed in September 2022, with 27 organisations initially committing to working together. Since then, the Alliance has continued to grow and now includes a broad membership of organisations and individuals. These include Traditional Custodians, landscape restoration practitioners, research organisations, conservation entities, and investors.

To develop solid foundations for an effective and sustainable Alliance, an 8 member skills-based Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance Interim Steering Group (ISG) was established in June 2023 to oversee the early phase of the Alliance for a period of two years. During this time, the ISG oversaw a number of foundational activities, including analysis of more permanent /future Alliance governance models, establishment of an investment working group, development of an Alliance annual workplan, web portal and membership directory, and many successful field days and workshops.

At the Alliance's annual event held in December 2024 and afterwards via a link in New Leaf, Alliance members and the restoration community voted (with 88% support) to move to a member-led Alliance Steering Group (ASG) at the end of the 2-year interim arrangement (June 2025).

The ASG roles and responsibilities will be reviewed at the end of 2 years to ensure the arrangements are fit for purpose and meet the needs of Alliance members.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The primary purpose of the ASG is to support the Restoration Alliance Coordination Team (Coordinator and Program Support Officer) in delivering the member-endorsed annual workplan, as well as addressing emerging Alliance-related issues or opportunities. The annual workplan identifies the core activities and key projects of the Alliance for the calendar year.

The Alliance workplan is supported by funding through the Wet Tropics Management Authority and resources contributed by James Cook University and Terrain NRM. As founding members, these organisations have committed to support the Alliance moving forward.

The current funding also covers two part-time staff (Coordinator and Program Support Officer), who will act as the secretariat, coordinate and provide logistical support for Alliance activities and events, and progress directions from the ASG through to December 2026.

ASG members will commit to delivering the purpose defined above. In addition, they will:

- attend and actively participate in quarterly ASG meetings (online or in person)
- provide timely and strategic advice to advance the objectives of the Alliance
- actively support the Restoration Alliance Coordination Team
- ensure that the issues and interests of Alliance members are considered and incorporated into the progress and activities of the Alliance
- participate in technical working groups, workshops, and field events where possible
- come up with great ideas to progress restoration in the region, and act as champions of the Alliance.

3. Membership

The ASG is skills-based and reflects the diversity of interest groups and individuals involved in restoration and stewardship across the Wet Tropics region. It will also be diverse with respect to gender, cultural and professional background, and location.

The ASG serving term shall be up to two years, and an ASG member may re-nominate but can only serve for two consecutive terms. It is desirable for two to three ASG members to serve consecutive terms to provide continuity. Five to seven members will be selected based on skill sets, including:

- science and research
- restoration experience
- indigenous knowledge and ecological solutions
- natural capital markets and investment (e.g. carbon farming or biodiversity credits)
- sustainable farming and/or land management
- advocacy and community engagement
- other skills as identified by the ASG.

ASG members must be a member of the Alliance as either an individual or through membership or employment of an Alliance member organisation. ASG members that are part of an Alliance member organisation are not required to seek endorsement from their organisation on Alliance matters. However, they are encouraged to share updates on Alliance issues and progress with their organisation.

The method of seeking ASG membership will be through an expression of interest process, where interested applicants address selection criteria based on the above skill sets. Members will be selected by an Independent Selection Committee (ISC).

4. Alliance Steering Group Chair

The Chair position will be elected by the ASG members, and the term of the Chair shall be one year. The role of the Chair is to lead ASG meetings, establish a strong working relationship between steering group members, and facilitate the flow of information between the ASG, founding members and the broader Alliance network of

members and stakeholders. The Chair will also serve as the key contact for the Restoration Alliance Coordination Team.

This includes:

- convening and facilitating ASG meetings
- leading discussions on the agenda items, seeking consensus on issues, and developing recommendations to present to the Alliance network and founding members where required
- liaising with the Restoration Alliance Coordination Team as needed to develop agendas and review and approve meeting minutes and papers
- ensuring adherence to the code of conduct at meetings
- overseeing strategic risk management and dispute resolution
- representing the ASG publicly where required.

5. Code of conduct

All ASG members will adhere to the following:

- Behave in a professional manner and maintain confidentiality on sensitive issues.
- Work cooperatively and endeavour to reach a consensus on issues discussed, where possible. If consensus cannot be reached, the issue will be decided by a majority vote.
- Address any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting or in a conflict-of-interest register. These will be noted in the meeting minutes.

The Chair may exclude individuals from decisions and/or discussions to manage conflicts of interest.

6. Meeting attendance and location

Member participation in the ASG is voluntary (unpaid); however, where members are not already covered for meeting attendance by their employer or research institution, personal out of pocket expenses associated with meeting attendance, including travel, will be reimbursed at the standard QLD government rate.

- Attendance in person is appreciated where practical, with virtual options available via Microsoft Teams as and when appropriate.
- Meetings will be held in Cairns or at a mutually agreeable location, as agreed and required.
- ASG meetings will be held at least four times a year (quarterly).
- In addition to the four ASG meetings, there will be an annual Alliance event, held to consult with and update Alliance members.
- Attendance at Alliance workshops and field trips is also encouraged.

7. Resignation

If an ASG member resigns before completing their term, the Alliance Coordinator may seek new candidates to fill the role based at the request of the remaining ASG members. Applicants must submit an Expression of Interest and will undergo a selection process overseen by the Independent Selection Committee.

The Independent Selection Committee will recommend the most suitable applicant, whose appointment will be endorsed by the ASG.

Further, if the ASG identifies a gap in skills or experience within the ASG, an additional member(s) may be appointed through a similar selection process. ASG members can resign by emailing the Alliance Coordinator at restoration@wtma.qld.gov.au.

8. Termination

- ASG members reserve the right to terminate an individual's membership in the ASG at any time, subject to procedural fairness and a majority vote from the ASG members. A termination notice must be provided in writing by the Chair.
- ASG membership may be terminated if a member fails to attend multiple consecutive meetings without a valid reason or takes an extended period of leave without notice.
- ASG membership may be terminated if a member does not act in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

9. Amendment, modification, or variation

This Terms of Reference may be amended, modified or varied in writing after consultation and consensus by the ASG members.

Endorsed date: 30 April 2025

Review date: