

Cultural Heritage indicators assessment of the Mackay-Whitsunday region

Conducted by the Traditional Owner Reference Group comprising Gia, Ngaro, Juru, Yuwibara, Koinmerburra and Barada/Wiri Traditional Owners and Terra Rosa Consulting for the Mackay-Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership – Executive Summary

The Mackay-Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership (the Partnership), consists of twenty-two partners from community, industry, science, tourism and government which support the development of an annual Mackay-Whitsunday report card.

As part of 2015 report card and under the umbrella of social indicators, the Partnership intends to develop the cultural heritage indicators and track the cultural heritage health of the defined geographical region. Terra Rosa Consulting (Terra Rosa) has been engaged by the Partnership to facilitate the development of these cultural heritage indicators which will inform the cultural heritage score for the 2016 report card.

In order to successfully complete this process, Terra Rosa is working collaboratively with the Gia, Ngaro, Juru, Yuwibara, Koinmerburra, Barada and Wiri Traditional Owners who are the Traditional Owner representatives of the Mackay-Whitsunday region and whose groups are collectively represented by the Reef Catchments Ltd (Reef Catchments) Traditional Owner Reference Group (TORG).

Drawing from best-practice frameworks of heritage management, the approach and methodology for developing the cultural heritage indicators for the Mackay-Whitsunday region will be based on these three key guiding principles:

1. Indigenous people as primary stakeholders;
2. A holistic understanding of heritage values; and
3. Adopting a cultural landscape approach.

As representatives of the TORG, the Gia, Ngaro, Juru, Yuwibara, Koinmerburra, Barada and Wiri Traditional Owners are considered to be primary stakeholders for this project. The TORG will have an active role in all stages of the project's heritage management process.

The established partnership with the TORG, Terra Rosa and Reef Catchments will allow for joint decision-making and power sharing, and an approach to cultural heritage management that prioritises collaboration and co-management and ensure that the project is based on holistic understanding, management and awareness of both tangible and intangible heritage values in the Mackay-Whitsunday region.

During the 2016 project, the field work was informed by the available desktop material and consultation with the TORG, and so focussed on the following areas:

1. St Helens Beach;
2. Hook Island, Whitsunday Island and South Molle Island;
3. Cape Hillsborough including Andrews Point, Wedge island, Finlayson Point and Haliday Bay;
4. Cape Palmerston; and



5. The Mackay Region.

During field work, the indicators for each of the zones visited were scored using the following scoring system:

Table 1: Scoring for indicators

Score	Grade	Value
4.51 – 5	A	Very High
4.1 – 4.5	B+	High
3.51 – 4	B-	
3.1 – 3.5	C+	Medium
2.51 – 3	C-	
2.1 – 2.5	D+	Low
1.51 – 2	D-	
1 – 1.5	E	Very low

To arrive at each indicator score, evidence was collected from a broad range of sources, including Traditional Owner consultation, scientific data, online resources such as the ALUM classification system, and research (as defined above).

During the field work it became apparent that there is a vast difference in preservation and management strategies across the regions of the study, and that the fragile heritage places within the littoral zone are under heavy pressure from climatic, development and recreational impacts.

A major contributor to the score this year is the inaccuracy of the existing DATSIP records which hampered the ability of the project to evaluate the areas in detail.

The following table provides a breakdown of the final scores attributed to each zone as part of the 2016 cultural heritage health assessment of the Mackay-Whitsunday region.

Table 2: Final zone scores 2016

	Zone	Score (1 – 5)	Grade
1	St Helens Beach	1.1	E
2	Hook Island, Whitsunday Island and South Molle Island	3.7	B
3	Cape Hillsborough	2.6	C
4	Cape Palmerston	NA	NA
5	Mackay Region	NA	NA

As a result of the above calculations, the final report card score for the cultural heritage health of the Mackay-Whitsunday region for 2016 is: **2.48 (D+)**.

Further analysis into the second year of the program of areas with better preservation conditions and management may enhance this score, as will the development of further frameworks to investigate and manage the sites that exist within the Region.