



MOONBI 106

MOONBI is the name given by the Butchalla Aborigines to the central part of their homeland, Fraser Island or "Kgari"
MOONBI is the newsletter of Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited, **PO Box 70, BALD HILLS QLD 4036**
FIDO, "The Watchdog of Fraser Island", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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What was promised for Fraser Island:

Prior to the last Queensland Elections in January 2001, Premier Beattie made a core promise as part of his election manifesto. These were that a re-elected Beattie Government was committed to:

- * *Giving statutory recognition to Queensland's responsibility to fulfil our obligations under the World Heritage Convention to formulate and implement WHA Management Plans that give priority to the protection and conservation of World Heritage values while presenting those values to the best advantage;*
- * *Giving legislative effect to World Heritage area Management Plans to ensure their planning policy and principles are reflected in local planning schemes and considered in the assessment of development applications, and*
- * *Giving priority to implementing the Great Sandy Region Management Plan (including bringing Fraser Island under the planning control of a single government agency) and finalize submissions necessary to expand the Fraser Island World Heritage area to incorporate the entire Great Sandy Region including Cooloola National Park.*

What has happened since 2001:

Some discussions were held in the Environmental Protection Agency involving bureaucrats and some representatives of the conservation movement. The EPA was determined despite opposition from FIDO to work on one single piece of legislation to cover all five Queensland World Heritage areas and potential future World Heritage sites. It proposed expanding the functions of the existing Cairns based Wet Tropics Management Authority to cover all World Heritage sites from the Gulf Country to the Scenic Rim. FIDO was unhappy with this "one-size-fits-all" option. The proposal fell well short of what was specifically promised for Fraser Island. FIDO believes that each World Heritage area has very specific problems not common with others. We also believe that because the sites are so widely geographically distributed that a single authority for all was unworkable.

What is likely before the next election:

Apart from legitimate parochial interests who want to maintain the Cairns based Wet Tropics Management Authority in Cairns, there are dark forces opposing any action to implement the Beattie Government's election promise. The Local Government Department believes that it is the only branch of government in Queensland which should have any role in planning. There are also a number of vested interests throughout Queensland who are opposed to any changes. Thus nothing is likely to be done before the next Queensland Election due before June 2004.

What will be lost:

Clearly this most blatant failure by the Beattie Government to deliver on a core 2001 election promise is a betrayal of trust. However, the public interest is the greatest loser. Our World Heritage areas are very significant economic generators. A study last year revealing that Fraser Island and the Daintree were worth \$677 million annually to the Queensland economy between them. If the rest of the Wet Tropics and the other World Heritage areas are considered it is possible that World Heritage areas add \$2 billion to the Queensland economy. However, without better management the full potential and the sustainability of these great assets is at serious risk.

While the Beattie Government has scored some points for some environmental action such as on stopping logging, phasing out land clearing, and starting to address water and other land degradation issues, it must be called to account for its failure to act decisively on World Heritage.

Summary of Recent Events

The loss of FIDO's Honorary Secretary of the last 17 years, Billie Watts was a sad loss for her family, for FIDO and for her myriads of friends. (See p2) The Premier was an old political colleague who thought that there should be some memorial to her on Fraser Island. That is a panel on the new viewing platform at Lake Allom (named after her father) which was unveiled by Environment Minister, Dean Wells, on 2nd November.

Unresolved Issues

This MOONBI features a list of many of the unresolved issues relating to the protection of Fraser Island's unique and outstanding natural values. Many of these issues go back almost 30 years but we are still awaiting a successful resolution of what we consider very serious matters. We propose to provide regular updates on the progress or lack of it to those issues listed on pp 6-7.

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Vale Billie Watts

8 April, 1924 —1 September, 2003

After suffering her first stroke on 19th June and spending several weeks hospitalized Billie Wattas died in the Palm Lodge Nursing Home on the first day of spring.

Billie had been Honorary Secretary of FIDO for the past 17 years during which time she was also a friend and confidante and, most of all, she was an inspiration.

There have been many times during the last 17 years when we thought that we may have been flogging a dead horse on some issues such as World Heritage but Billie's indefatigable persistence and encouragement enabled us to overcome any suggestion that we should resign ourselves into acceptance of the unacceptable.

In 1978 the Queensland Place Names Board reviewed the names for the geographical features of Fraser Island. There were no known Aboriginal names for a lake which had never been officially named and which was labelled on the maps as "AB Lake" after the survey line on which it was located. It was suggested that it should be named after the surveyor who had carried out the AB traverse. By a happy accident it turned out that the surveyor was Billie's father, Noel Allom who was later in the 1930s to return to Maryborough as District Forester.

However, just having a beautiful lake named for her father wasn't enough for Billie. She was determined that the island which she knew so well as a child should be seen by others in the pristine state in which she first knew it. She was determined to see its World Heritage values recognized even though it meant an end to logging. She spared none of her legendary energy and drive to achieve the best possible outcome for her beloved island. She advocated; she cajoled; she phoned and faxed and she button holed; and mostly she eventually achieved. World Heritage

But it was not only Fraser Island she worked so tirelessly for. From her earliest years she has been an activist pushing for almost every issue of social justice. She has advocated almost every aspect of social justice from protecting Queenslanders' civil liberties and the environment to women's and Aboriginal rights. She was prepared to defy unjust laws and be arrested to support her strong principles of social justice. She wasn't afraid to face baton charges by police during the Queensland state of Emergency to enable Springboks to play Rugby in Brisbane. It is small wonder that she was such an inspiration not only to FIDO but to the whole spectrum of non-profit groups advocating for social justice and the public interest.

Billie's life was steeped in Labor Party politics. She was a key person in the reform of the party in Queensland during the 1970s. Conversations with Billie were never bogged down with trivia. They were always uplifting and energizing. FIDO is going to miss her charismatic presence and her wise counsel. She served FIDO as Secretary for 17 years but above all she has provided us all with an exemplary model for how we can as concerned citizens serve the community the public interest.

She served her country in the WRAAAF during World War II and received the community service and centenary medals in recognition of her work. A testimony to the love and affection with which she was held was demonstrated at her funeral and wake and in the Premier Beattie's decision to dedicate a memorial to her at Lake Allom in November.



Rob Widdon Billie Watts and Peter Beattie during the restructuring of the Queensland branch of the ALP.

Rejuvenating FIDO

After 17 years with Billie as Honorary Secretary of FIDO it has come to a time for change and rejuvenation. Happily this has begun seamlessly. Billie's illness on 19th June coincided with the return to Brisbane, Michelle Sinclair, a former member of the Executive who has spent the past eleven years in Cairns. Michelle at age 34 has taken up the venerable position of FIDO Secretary. Other executive members were re-elected with Dr. Ian Matthews, remaining President, Terry Hampson as Treasurer and other VPs John Sinclair (Jr.), John Davie, and Judy Tambling continuing. However the Executive welcomes renewed interest from newer member of the organization to help the organization continue its distinguished role into the future. As the Attached table in this MOONBI which we propose to update each new MOONBI there is a loot remaining to be done which requires an effective watchdog. (Meetings are held in Brisbane one the first Wednesday of each month at about 6.00 p.m.) Because of his inability to be at most meetings, Honorary Project Officer, John Sinclair Snr., is not a member of the Executive.



Fraser Changes Over Time

The accompanying educational backgrounder to this MOONBI features a pictorial record of how Fraser Island has changed in recent years. It is now more than 30 years since we began accruing FIDO's pictorial records of places and events on Fraser Island. However this backgrounder shows the extent and the surprising pace of many of the environmental changes in that time.

Because of her long-standing interest in the history of the Maryborough district, we are dedicating this backgrounder to another stalwart Maryborough historian and conservationist, the late **Catherine (Kit) Mackay**. Kit never took an active role in FIDO but she was always ready to argue its case in Maryborough where the voice of good reason on Fraser Island issues is often hard to be heard.