

Eli Creek Boardwalk

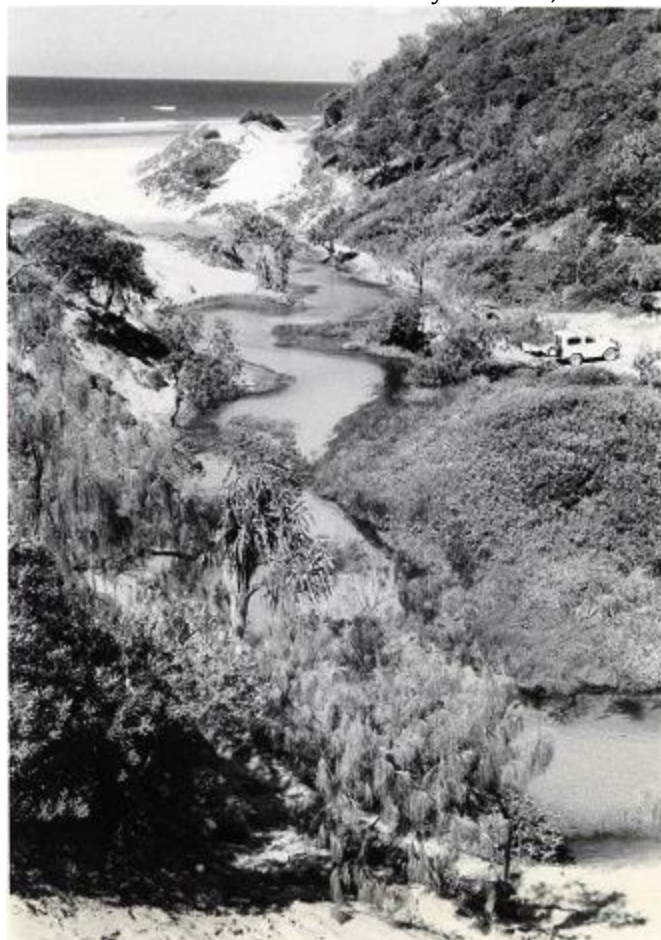
In 1981, the Queensland Government was still smarting at the Federal intervention that stopped sandmining on Fraser Island in its tracks at the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1976. They argued that tourism was doing more damage to Fraser Island than sandmining and then neglected management of Fraser Island in the hope that their claim would prove correct. This Backgrounder (No 66 — February 2014) describes FIDO's direct action that shamed the recalcitrant government into doing more to protect this amazing natural asset eventually accepted as a World Heritage site despite opposition. FIDO was determined to remedy the situation despite the Government negligence and the fact it was in a mining lease and FIDO had no legal authority. This pictorial supplement gives a picture of the project that took 18 weekend working bees for FIDO volunteers.



Eli Creek in 1973. Note the Pandanus at the bend of the creek. Annual visitation was then only about 25,000.



Eli Creek in 1981. Note the Pandanus at the bend of the creek had disappeared and this was when FIDO determined to pursue its ambitious project to remediate the situation with a boardwalk



Eli Creek 1980 The pandanus on the creek bend was still there but the underlying peat was being compressed by thousands of feet. The creek was getting wider and shallower. The northern bank was seriously eroded by the number of pedestrians walking upstream. Campers were allowed to camp anywhere they pleased. There were no toilets anywhere north of Happy Valley



Eli Creek Easter 1981: The impact of people was clearly evident and FIDO determined that something had to be done with or without permission



The timber was supplied by Hyne and Sons. Despite their dispute with FIDO over the future Fraser Island's forest supplies, it supplied the timber to FIDO at half price. Construction was by willing volunteers.



The completed boardwalk enabled the creek-side vegetation to re-establish and the creek soon deepened. FIDO did a lot of planting to help the healing. The scarring quickly overgrew.



Dr Trevor Sauer usually used much finer instruments than an axe to perform his operations



The project had two ancillary constructions — a shelter shed and tables and two low maintenance long-drop toilets.

Work is advanced on the shelter shed (above). Note the sandblow on the southern side of the creek. This is where the stairs now lead up to new flushing toilets installed by the Queensland Government. The Government was shamed into action following the success and popularity of FIDO's initiative. In 1985 the Fraser Island Recreation Act was passed. It established Queensland's first Recreation Area but was superseded by the RAM Act. The first actions were to remove all evidence that FIDO had ever done anything at Eli Creek.

FIDO's toilets (below) weren't completely open-air but they worked very effectively and hygienically. FIDO's shelter shed, toilets and boardwalk were demolished in 1986 and replaced at enormous cost to taxpayers.

