



MOONBI 107

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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The Political Scene

Beattie Government Re-elected: On 7th February the Beattie Government was re-elected with a large mandate and a new election promise which should help ensure the protection of Fraser Island's wild streams. Fortunately we didn't have to wait for too long into 2004 for the election because there was a log-jam of initiatives needed for Fraser Island which had been put on hold before the election due to "political sensitivity" (See p11).

New Minister: In a new-look revitalized cabinet, Premier Beattie has appointed John Mickel as the new Environment Minister. In his first official visit as Environment Minister, John Mickel went to Fraser Island where he made some important announcements. (pp2-3) FIDO met Minister Mickel in March.

Local Government: The political scene underwent some further changes with the local government elections on 27th March. While there have been some changes in the composition of both the Hervey Bay and Maryborough City Councils there doesn't appear to be any sea-changes which might affect the attitude of either Council to Fraser Island. Both treat it as a cash cow to subsidize council activities on the mainland rather than an asset which help drive the economies of their mainland communities. While we hope for a change of heart from Fraser Island's relevant local authorities we still believe that the best outcome for Fraser Island will come from all the administration coming under a single authority. (See p7)

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Offshore Areas: MOONBI 107 deals with some issues which haven't previously received as much column space as we would wish. For example, this issue deals with a variety of marine issues. (See pp 5-6). Apart from the continuing friction between fishers and non-fishers and commercial and recreational fishers, there are many new elements posed by proposed and actual aquaculture ventures: scallops, pearls and beche-de-mer. We need to more closely monitor all threats to Fraser Island's marine environs.

Publications: We include extracts from a Federal Government report to the World Heritage Committee (p8) and some extracts from an EPA publication with some Fraser Island news, "Sand Paper" (p9)

Omissions: We had planned to also include a review of Fraser Island research (including the latest on dingoes) in this issue, but again space precluded. Those articles will now be in MOONBI 108 which we hope to have in print by August. FIDO remains very concerned that information gained from the research undertaken on Fraser Island is not being widely to the decision makers it is of negligible benefit except for academic interest. We are anxious to

know what is being learnt about this natural wonder of the world.

Fraser Island 20-20

The revitalized and rejuvenated FIDO Executive has embarked on a bold new initiative to address some of the major issues confronting Fraser Island with a conference at Noosa on August. The Conference "Fraser Island 20-20" will try to develop a vision for what Fraser Island should be like in 2020 with 20-20 vision. This is one of the biggest initiatives yet organized by FIDO in the last decade and should attract scientists, managers, and all Fraser Island stakeholders to interact over the kind of vision we see for Fraser Island 16 years hence. With South East Queensland being one of Australia's major population growth centres, the Great Sandy Region is destined to come under much greater pressure as it represents the largest natural area. Details of the Conference can be found on FIDO's net site: www.fido.org.au/2020 The next MOONBI is not scheduled before July so anyone interested in the conference should monitor our web site for any updates.

Backgrounders: This MOONBI again includes two backgrounders. Working on the principle that a picture saves thousands of words we include another pictorial supplement illustrating the extent of environmental changes occurring to the sand-blows and to Wabby Lakes. The other backgrounder is also topical because it deals with the role of the Non-Profit Lobby at a time when some people are actively campaigning to remove all government support and concessions for any "charity" which actively lobbies governments. Fortunately FIDO receives no concessions as a "charity" although we have received small grants from the Queensland Government to assist us to respond to all calls for public consultations on Fraser Island.

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Fraser camp-grounds have new futures

It is some years ago that the number of camper-nights spent on Fraser Island plateau ed. While the number of visitors continues to climb, it appears that much of the expanded visitation is being accommodated in resorts and dwellings at Kingfisher, Eurong and Happy Valley, Orchid Beach and Cathedral Beach. Despite the number of campers not increasing, the camper impacts continue to grow and become increasingly obvious to all long-time Fraser Island visitors. To ameliorate the impacts, FIDO supports a ban on all free-range camping along the eastern beach and an expansion of formal campgrounds. The EPA says that it doesn't have the resources to build and manage camping areas but it is still unwilling to limit the amount of camping to make it more sustainable

Minister's First Job: It didn't take long for the newly appointed Queensland Environment Minister John Mickel to get into stride and start addressing some of the critical issues relating to Fraser Island. Less than two weeks after moving into the portfolio, he officially opened the new, totally rebuilt camp-ground at Central Station on 20th February. He simultaneously announced the closure of two other camping areas on Fraser Island which have long been advocated.

FIDO wishes to congratulate the Minister on these initiatives which have been on the FIDO agenda of unresolved management issues for some time (See pp 8-9 MOONBI 106).

Central Station Opened: The \$1.2 million Central Station Campground can take up to 300 campers (including hikers, camper trailers and larger groups) each night during peak times. The Queensland Government had contributed \$630,000 and the Commonwealth Government a further \$680,000. Dingo management measures include fencing, food storage lockers, lighting and washing-up facilities. Effluent treatment, water conservation and waste management is done in an environmentally-friendly way. The amenities building features low volume flush toilets, low-flow showerheads and instant hot water systems. The wastewater treatment plant treats the effluent to secondary standard. It's then suitable for irrigation. This new system replaces the underground discharge of wastewater.

Campground Closures: The new Environment Minister also announced on 20th February the Queensland Government's decision to close vehicle-based camping at Lake McKenzie, and all camping at Indian Head by the end of March, because of overuse and damage to the environment. FIDO welcomes both decisions as being in the public interest as well as being in the interests of helping to improve the integrity of Fraser Island and the overall experience of all visitors. There are still other urgent management issues to deal with at both places. At Indian Head, it is the excessive wear and tear on the headland itself from the pedestrian access. At Lake McKenzie, it is how to better manage and develop the lake as a day-use area. FIDO doesn't endorse the early plans which proposed by the EPA because it will increase hill-side erosion above the lake.

Lake McKenzie: Lake McKenzie is the most popular of all Fraser's inland lakes. It attracts 2000 visitors a day in peak periods. It has a long history of conflict between user groups because of crowding and insufficient space. Day visitors can still access Lake McKenzie and hikers will be able to camp there at one of the specially designed and newly constructed hiker camp stops on the Fraser Island Great Walk once it opens in June this year. FIDO and the Fraser Island Advisory Committees support the decision to close Lake McKenzie to vehicle-based camping. It opens up an area to allow everyone to appreciate this lake's natural beauty during a day trip.

Indian Head: CAC also endorsed the closure of camping at Indian Head. It had become a gathering point for up to 400

backpackers each night, because it's the most northerly point accessible to their hire vehicles and is close to the Champagne Pools. That high use was unsustainable. There were health risks from human waste. There are no amenities and none are feasible in an area of known tidal surges. The nearest toilets are at Middle Rocks about 2.5 kilometres away. As a result Rangers have the odious daily duty of picking up "paper daisies" (used toilet paper) left to blow around by people who also often leave a vast legacy of green (beer) cans behind as well. The Indian Head site is significant to traditional owners. The campers impacted on the World Heritage values. There are risks to both people and dingoes from such a concentration of campers who usually spend the only two nights in their life on Fraser Island. FIDO has been very keen to see the cessation of camping there. The QPWS plans to reopen one kilometre of beach near Dundubara to camping. That together with the expanded Cathedral Beach camping ground are expected to accommodate the backpackers.

Dilli Village: In addition to the above two closures FIDO has heard that there has been a temporary closure of the Dilli Village camping area while the camp is being redeveloped by the University of the Sunshine Coast. FIDO welcomes the passing of the management to the USC but believes that the public interest will best be served by forgetting camping at Dilli Village and focussing on providing reasonable budget accommodation at Dilli Village.

Cathedral Beach: There are many significant changes occurring at Cathedral Beach since the Fraser Island Company (which runs Top Tours and the Happy Valley Resort) took over from Norma Hannant late last year. Whereas backpackers were discouraged by Norma (or at least encouraged to camp as far away from Cathedral Beach as possible) the new management welcomes backpackers and is going out of its way to cater for them.

Eurong: At Eurong also wants to cater for more backpacker campers. The trouble is that Eurong Resort's site is built out and has no room for campers. To accommodate campers Queensland Tourism & Leisure has proposed that the Maryborough City Council assign part of its community purposes reserve to enable the resort to establish a small camp-ground (about 12 sites).



FIDO Meets Minister Mickel

On 19th March representatives of FIDO met the new Environment Minister, John Mickel, in person for the first time. We are most impressed at how quickly he has developed an appreciation of the issues confronting the island which he

New Minister Announces Fraser Initiatives

John Mickel said that he deliberately chose Fraser Island as the location for his first official visit as a minister because of its environmental and economic significance. He is particularly aware of the latter. He said that the Island is a great example of what can be achieved when stakeholders work together to protect the environment and, at the same time, create new opportunities in regional Queensland.

has only first visited during a whirlwind trip of only a few hours to open the new Central Station campground. There are some issues on which FIDO is not in agreement with the Minister including the reopening of the beach area near Dundubara for free range camping. (Since the meeting we have evaluated this site and believe it will only transfer the Indian Head problem to a new even more visible area). However, we found his quick grasp of the fragility of Fraser Island, its outstanding natural values as well as its special needs to protect them most encouraging. FIDO looks forward to working with Minister Mickel for a better future for Fraser Island.

Minister Mickel accepted FIDO's invitation to open the Fraser Island 20-20 Conference at Noosa in August (see p12) and will have the opportunity to expand on his vision for the island then.

18 new Eco-friendly Ranger houses

During his first official visit to Fraser Island Environment Minister, John Mickel announced that the Queensland Government would be investing over \$2 million in 18 new houses for rangers there. He said "*Rangers are at the front-line of managing and protecting this World Heritage-listed island and improving their living conditions is a priority. The new housing will ensure rangers have their own comfortable living space but they will also be situated in a way which creates a sense of community. This will help in attracting staff to Fraser Island and keeping them there.*"

He said that the state-of-the-art houses have been designed by Gabriel Poole, and would set new standards in environmental design and innovation. "*The houses will include eco-friendly features such as solar hot water, 'water-wise' showers and long-life fluorescent lighting. They'll be naturally cooled by cross-ventilation and insulation, with wide roof overhangs to shade walls.*"

The low-cost, innovative and energy-efficient houses will be built of durable, easily transportable material and assembled off-site to minimise waste and site disturbance during installation.



Fraser Island Great Walk

The Queensland Government is investing \$802,000 in the Fraser Island Great Walk, a scenic 6-8 day hike on sandy tracks, along rainforest paths and past pristine lakes. It links Dilli Village to Lake Garawongera. By the late February, \$530,000 out of the total budget had been spent on the project.

New hikers' camps at four lakes and the Valley of the Giants are nearing completion. Track construction is ahead of schedule with approximately 88 of the 90 kilometres of the Great Walk completed. The entire 80 kilometres of feeder routes are also now in place. These feeder routes are dedicated walking tracks, mostly along fire-trails and old Forestry roads. They will link the Great Walk to major barge landings and visitor centres, thus allowing walkers to enter and exit the Great Walk at various points and eliminating the need for hikers to use busy 4WD roads to access the track system. The walk is part of a \$10 million project that is establishing six long-distance world-class walking trails totalling almost 400 kilometres through some of Queensland's most prominent parks and forests.

In commending the new Fraser Island Great Walk, John Mickel said, "*The Fraser Island Great Walk will ultimately rival some of the world's other 'must do' hiking trails such as the Milford Track in New Zealand and the United Kingdom's National Trails. This walk will add to the Fraser Island experience.*"

He added, "*This walk will create new eco-tourism opportunities and that means more jobs for people in the Wide Bay region. The Fraser Coast-South Burnett region, which includes Hervey Bay, attracts more than 1.2 million domestic and international visitors every year and those visitors make a vital contribution to the local economy.*"

The QPWS will soon invite expressions of interest from commercial operators to select appropriate people who will provide services to hikers such as guided walks, transport and accommodation packages. A new permit and booking system is being developed that will allow walkers to make advance bookings via the Internet from anywhere in the world to secure their campsite along the Great Walk. It will also provide rangers with essential visitor data to guide track management decisions.

Great Walk Camping Areas

The extensive network of walking tracks leading into the Fraser Island Great Walk will involve the creation of new special hikers camping areas. While FIDO and most other stakeholders applaud the creation of designated areas for walkers, there has been some significant criticism about the lack of shelter being offered in these camps. Despite the matter being regularly raised the issue continues to be evaded by the EPA. The camping areas are fenced off from dingoes. They all have access to proper toilets and all seem to have a number of low benches about 50 cm from the ground which double as seats or a very low table.

FIDO thinks open shelters with just a roof and a wall on the south east side and a higher table should be provided. If it is raining, walkers would then have somewhere dry at least to

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unpack while establishing their tents and somewhere to use their fuel stoves other than in their tents. We still hope that the EPA will respond to this reasonable request.

World Heritage Area Off-shore

One of the most overlooked parts of the Fraser Island World Heritage Area is the marine component. The World Heritage area extends 500 metres offshore all around Fraser Island. Yet although fishing and whale watching are major attractions of the Great Sandy Region these represent the most neglected part of the management. Primary Industries has a responsibility for management of the fishery but they are reluctant or intimidated and thus have failed in their responsibilities. The Environmental Protection Agency has responsibility for the protection of the World Heritage site but they seem inhibited from doing anything which might tread on another department's toes. The result is that while generally indecision prevails many ad-hoc decisions are made which are contrary both to the public interest and to the environment.

MOONBI has long wanted to develop an overall statement to show that the management of the marine resources in the Fraser Island World Heritage area are falling short of what is required. It is also the marine resources (fish) which have long attracted a very significant number of visitors to Fraser Island and the management of this segment of Fraser Island visitors hasn't always been consistent with the management of other Fraser Island visitors. Until now, space constraints and resources have prevented MOONBI covering these issues critical to Fraser Island's World Heritage values. This is an attempt to identify the many issues affecting the Great Sandy Region management.

Commonwealth's Marine Evaluation

In its report to the World Heritage Committee, the Australian Government commented on the significance of the marine areas. The following are some extracts from that report:

"The Fraser Island World Heritage Area extends 500m seaward of the high water mark. This includes freshwater swamps and patterned fens which are contiguous with the mangroves on Fraser Island".

Great Sandy Region Marine Park: This is currently being considered. As the first stage of a planning process community involvement aims to identify issues for the protection, conservation and ecologically sustainable use of the area's marine resources. The Northern section extends north from Double Island Point, and includes Woongarra Marine Park, Hervey Bay, the Hervey Bay Marine Park, the Great Sandy Strait, Tin Can Bay and Inlet, and three miles off Fraser's eastern shore. It contains existing fish habitat reserves and wetland reserves. The inclusion of Queensland tidal lands and waters abutting the coasts of Fraser Island WHA and parts of the Cooloola section of the Great Sandy National Park will complement management of these magnificent of the protected Great Sandy Region terrestrial area. **(FIDO: No mention was made at the political inertia which stalled its implementation.)**

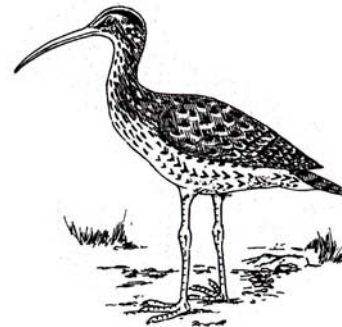
Great Sandy Strait: Great Sandy Strait (GSS) is one of the few passage landscapes in Australia. It is a double-ended estuary, characterised by the largest areas of tidal swamps in the South-east Queensland. The Strait is the largest area of tidal swamps within the South East Queensland. Roughly one-third are intertidal sand and mud flats. These include seagrass beds, mangrove forests, salt flats and saltmarshes. They often contiguous with freshwater Melaleuca wetlands and coastal wallum swamps. The Strait is an exceptionally important feeding ground for migratory shorebirds and important for a wide range of other shorebirds, waterfowl and seabirds, marine fish, crustaceans, oysters, dugong, sea turtles and dolphins.

The area is located between the rapidly growing Hervey Bay and Cooloola Coast population centres, and the Fraser Island

World Heritage Area. The Strait has been declared a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention.

GSS is the least modified of three such passages in Queensland. GSS (with Tin Can Bay and Tin Can Inlet) was listed under the Ramsar Convention in 1999, primarily to protect and conserve its important waterfowl and wader habitat, it was largely undisturbed. Much of the Ramsar site is outside the current World Heritage area. The proposed marine park will provide better management of the Ramsar site through specific regulation of activities that threaten resident and migratory shorebirds, such as disturbance by dogs and boating activity.

Migratory Birds: GSS provides important habitat for an internationally significant population of trans-equatorial migratory waders off the western shore of Fraser Island. Most of the migratory shorebirds are also specifically protected under the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) and the China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA). Eighteen of the 24 species listed under these agreements use these wetlands, which are recognised as among the most important roosting areas for migratory trans-equatorial shorebirds in Australia.



Failure to Deliver on Promises

One of the most glaring failures of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan has been its failure on the issue of fishing (Section 4.05). The Management Plan noted: *"There is continuing concern that the stocks of fish and other marine and freshwater resources are being depleted"* and *"There appears to be an over capacity in the commercial fishing fleet operating in the Great Sandy Region."* After a full decade the Queensland Government is no closer to honouring the Management Plan's undertaking *"to develop a detailed management plan for fisheries of the region"*.

Despite the issuing of a discussion paper to develop an *"Inshore Finfish Management Plan"* for southern Queensland in 1996, nothing has progressed beyond inviting and receiving submissions. Our continuing efforts to have someone from the DPI or the Queensland Fish Management Authority brief the CAC on progress towards the Fisheries Management Plan of the Great Sandy Region have failed. The CAC was promised

that a briefing paper would be mailed to committee members before the April meeting. In view of all of the other failures to deliver, it will be surprising if that materializes.

If it was left entirely to the bureaucracy, nothing would happen. Luckily the Minister, a keen amateur angler, has acknowledged the obvious — that the fishery is in serious decline. The Queensland Government has implemented some conservation measures such as the new limits on tailor fishing on Fraser Island, but a much more comprehensive plan is long overdue.

Grey Nurse (and other) Sharks

The grey nurse shark (*Carcharias taurus*), one of Australia's most endangered marine species reaches the northern limit in the Great Sandy Region. Wolf Rock off Double Island Point is one of its 19 main aggregation points off eastern Australia. Despite not being a threat to man, it was hunted almost to extinction during the 1960s due to its fierce appearance. Despite bans on taking the sharks, numbers continue to decline toward extinction. Activities such as fishing and diving continue to impact on the sharks. It is estimated that there are less than 500 left along Australia's east coast. Research has indicated that without extra protection, the species could be extinct within 40 years. Premier Beattie announced in December that the Queensland Government would ban fishing within 1.3 km of Wolf Rock to protect the grey nurse shark and its habitat.

FIDO has long advocated stopping shark meshing off Rainbow Beach because of the horrific toll on dugong, dolphins, sharks, rays and turtles. Unfortunately the new regulations around Wolf Rock don't require the removal of the nets which are heavily impacting on the region's marine ecology.



The Scallops Issue

The Queensland Government has fast-tracked the establishment of a scallop industry in Hervey Bay without any environmental impacts study. An area of one kilometre square in the middle of Platypus Bay (off Wathumba Creek) in the Hervey Bay Marine Park has been set aside for trials. The area has been seeded with sprats. Although FIDO understands that the scallops will grow naturally and derive all nutrients just by filtering sea-water, the impact comes through harvesting them. Trawlers just plough up and down dragging the sea-bed bare to retrieve the scallops. Further while other trawlers have to keep out of the specified trial area, they can be expected to be trawling around the edge of the trials for the inevitable escapees. Apart from the impact on the seabed, trawling could seriously impact on non-target marine life.

The Pearling Farm Options

There is now a race on to set up a pearling industry in Hervey Bay. The Queensland Pearling Company wants to set up a 5ha farm on the seabed south of the Woody Island lighthouse in Great Sandy Strait. The proponent claims that there will be no nets, no lines or cages to get in the way of boaties or to stop fishers using the area. Company principals have experience with cultured pearl farms in the Northern Territory. The attraction for the proponents is the site's close proximity to the

harbour which will keep down their overheads and enable them to compete with producers in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The company reported to have established a hatchery at Toogoom on the shores of Hervey Bay.

The Fraser Island Fishing Expo

Any discussion of the marine environment must consider the impact of the concentrated fishing effort occasioned by the annual Toyota Fishing Expo. Mercifully the current agreement is due to expire next year. The Queensland Government should not renew that agreement. The DPI has been seduced by the euphoria of a great "boys own" party and failed to properly evaluate the impact of this event on the marine environment.

Great Sandy Marine Park

It is almost two years since the Beattie Government announced that it was calling for submissions for a zoning plan for a proposed Northern Section of Great Sandy Marine Park. The submissions have been received and processed. A consultative committee of all stakeholders held a series of meetings and by late 2003, the zoning plan was ready and the marine Park could be gazetted. FIDO understands that the proposed zoning plan was heavily weighted in favour of leaving areas still open for fishing with the main contest over whether areas should be open for commercial or recreational fishing. The area set aside as a green zone (i.e. Marine National Park) was pitifully small. Fishers weren't even prepared to willingly forego fishing near Wolf Rock, the habitat of the endangered Grey Nurse Shark. Luckily the premier intervened and there is now at least effectively a small Marine National Park there. However in the more critical areas like Breaksea Spit, the rocky headlands and Platypus Bay, FIDO's understands that there hasn't been adequate recognition of conservation values and the need to protect them. However, the pre-election jitters effectively stalled this as it has stalled any major marine initiatives in the Great Sandy Region for more than a decade.

Commercial Fishers' "Rights"

One of the statement in the Great Sandy Region Management Plan was, "*Commercial fishers have legal rights and responsibilities which the general community needs to better understand.*" FIDO still doesn't know what these claimed "rights" are. All we can see is that the RAM Act and the Nature Conservation Act were waived to allow fishers to remain camped at Waddy Point for over a decade and get away with other cowboy behaviour at other sites. (The camp at Waddy Point was only finally shifted in January). Nobody wants to explain or discuss these "rights" created in very recent history. These rights allow them to have access to beaches closed to everyone else and supposedly entitle the fishers to great compensation if they are infringed in any way. Nobody has yet attempted to provide a clear explanation. If we don't understand these "rights", possibly there is no explanation.



Development on Fraser's Doorstep

The Cooloola Coast's sleepy townships of Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach are separated from usual rural land use patterns by swathes of Forestry and National Park. They possess significant conservation qualities and agreements that

are recognised at the State, Federal and International level. So far the Cooloola Coast has been spared consumption by the modern urban development monster besetting other coastal communities. Only the daily 4WD frenzy on Rainbow Beach indicate the proximity of the urban sprawl to the south.

Developers want to establish a mega marina development in the quiet fishing village setting of Tin Can Bay. Tin Can Bay has a population of 1900 people, mostly fishermen and retirees. Storage for 500 boats is planned. This would be in addition to the existing 100 berth Tin Can Bay Marina. The proposal seeks to locate in the Snapper Creek boat harbour immediately adjacent to the Cooloola RAMSAR listed wetlands, the Great Sandy Marine Park (Northern Section) and the pending Cooloola World Heritage Area. It plans considerable dredging and reclamation works as well as the removal of mangroves and large areas of inter-tidal flat.

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Fraser Island Visitor Statistics

derived from data provided by the by the EPA Office Maryborough to John Sinclair and from the EPA Annual Report

Year	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Monthly Mean	% 5y Increase
July	28,632	29,179	30,337	27,988	33,089	29,845	1.15566499
August	28,143	29,351	28,851	25,695	31,810	28770	1.13029883
September	28,568	31,653	31,396	29,843	30,676	30427.2	1.07378885
October	39,186	33,840	27,863	29,072	34,827	32,958	0.88876129
November	22,849	22,507	27,325	27,688	28,534	32225.75	1.24880739
December	31,492	27,747	31,215	29,397	33,488	30667.8	1.06338118
January	26,198	24,091	33,732	34,964	35,253	38559.5	1.34563707
February	16,113	18,539	N/A	34,994	22,445	23022.75	1.39297462
March	23,341	18,932	N/A	22,549	25,525	23022.75	1.09356926
April	23,532	27,046	N/A	28,815	30,584	27494.25	1.29967704
May	18,130	19,319	N/A	21,046	19,585	19,520	1.08025372
June	19,533	19,439	N/A	21,048	19,521	19885.25	0.99938566
Annual Total	305,717	301,643		333,099	345,337		1.12959698

This table shows that there is relatively little variation in visitor statistics between the peak and off peak months. Even in the quietest months for visitation on Fraser Island (May and June) there can be expected to be 20,000 visitors and in the busiest months (July and January) the island can expect about 33,000 visitors.

* It also shows a continuing but steady growth in visitation of almost 13% over the five year period..

* There has been a slow but steady increase in the proportion carried on commercial tours. In 2002-03 of the 345,337 visitors the EPA Annual Report to parliament shows that 217,824 or 63% of all visitors travelled on commercial tours.

* There were 320,974 camper nights meaning that on average there are close to 1000 people camping on Fraser Island every night. (That doesn't count the residents and people in resort and other private accommodation on the island.

* The Annual Report shows that in addition the vehicles of the EPA, residents' and commercial tour operators, 40,376 vehicle permits were issued. That averages at over 110 vehicles moving on (and off) the island every day. It is small wonder that the roads are degrading at such an alarming rate.

Problems to Be Weeded Out

Tim Lowe's book, "Feral Futures" describes a bleak future for the natural environment which continues to be invaded by feral animals and weeds inexorably altering and depleting natural biodiversity. While Fraser Island is insulated by its marine boundary, new weeds continue to arrive, become established and invade Fraser Island's natural environment with alarming rapidity.

The invasion of weeds on Fraser Island needs to be addressed with greater urgency. In all National Parks around Australia, the invasion of weeds presents major threats to their natural integrity.

Grasses: Some of the worst invaders are alien grasses. Already there are many of these. Three decades ago, it was beach spinifex which invaded with dramatic impact on the foredunes. The foredunes now have a mixture of introduced grasses. Most were introduced by private landholders to create manageable lawns around their houses but now the grasses are spreading. There is a grass which appears only in alluvial wash from roads and tracks. It can not only be seen along the roads but can be seen on the waking track into Wabby Lakes. This needs to be stopped before it spreads any further.

Garden Escapees: **Easter cassia** arrived on Fraser Island as a hardy garden ornamental as did the **Asparagus ferns** and **Umbrella trees** and other garden plants. These are now free in the environment and fanning out from the centres of infestations in townships into the National Park. There are other intractable weeds such as **Singapore Daisy** still growing around many houses. Also growing and spreading are a number of succulents, including **sisal** and **mother-in-laws tongues**. The greatest problem though is that many land-owners seem oblivious of the weed potential they have introduced and are doing nothing to stop them spreading into the surrounding bush. They accept no responsibility.

Self Introduced Weeds such as **groundsel** and **lantana** are amongst the most virulent and difficult of all weeds. While

biological controls have slowed down their rate of invasion, to eliminate them will take a sustained physical removal effort.

Deliberate introductions: All weeds aren't escapees. Some were spread by people thinking they were doing a public good. The proliferation of casuarinas has had a lot of human help. The occurrence of sisal at the site of two Aboriginal "missions", Bogimbah and Sandy Cape, is because sisal was seen as a source of fibre Aborigines might weave.

Eliminating Weeds

Eurong: With Greening Australia's assistance, FIDO has made some impact on the weeds at Eurong but it needs the cooperation from many other sources to get the weeds under control. Many thistles, small weeds and alien grasses could be controlled by regular mowing. This should eventually both control the weeds and remove the seed source. That is beyond the resources of FIDO. It requires the cooperation of the Maryborough City Council, the Eurong Resort and residents. It also requires a whole lot of rubbish (from truck bodies to broken bottles) be removed first. So far there has been no clear indication that this cooperation will be forthcoming.

Happy Valley: This has the worst weed infestation on Fraser Island. Now that the issue of responsibility for controlling the weeds on the public land within the township has passed from the Hervey Bay City Council to the DNRM we hope for some progress. With volunteers from the National Park Association of Queensland FIDO will be addressing this problem area this month and will report in future issues of MOONBI.

The Queensland "State of the Environment" Report indicated that in botanical surveys on other parts of the Queensland coast

26% of the vascular plant species found were exotics and another 1.6% were displaced natives. We don't want that proportion on Fraser Island.

Along with a summary of the latest research on Fraser Island, MOONBI 108 will carry a full page article based on recent scientific research summarizing the risk to the purity of Australia's dingo population and the importance of Fraser Island's pure dingo gene pool.

A Single Authority for Fraser Island

The complexity of Fraser Island is even greater than previously believed as FIDO has discovered in attempting to deal with a simple problem such as weeds at Happy Valley. We discover that the Council's jurisdiction does not extend over the whole of the Happy Valley town reserve but only over the roads and the subdivided area. The rest of the town is the responsibility of the Dept Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) which has to address the weed problem. It took 18 months for this issue to be clarified, it even came as a surprise to the Council. FIDO will now address the Happy Valley weeds problem with the DNRM during a working bee with volunteers from the National Parks Association of Queensland on 22nd April.

Apart from the two City Councils (Maryborough and Hervey Bay) and the EPA and now the DNRM, there are other Queensland government departments who also have to be consulted. The failure of the DPI to deliver a fisheries Management Plan for the Great Sandy Region in the decade since the Management Plan was adopted is but one example. It is extremely difficult to enforce speed limits without a local authority as there is no clear jurisdiction without a single authority.

Having a single authority for Fraser Island remains FIDO's highest priority. As we grapple with the ineffectiveness of a multiplicity of agencies who have other responsibilities as well as Fraser Island, we believe that an authority with a sole responsibility for managing this outstanding \$300 billion plus asset is both urgent and vital.



56 Destroyed Dingoes

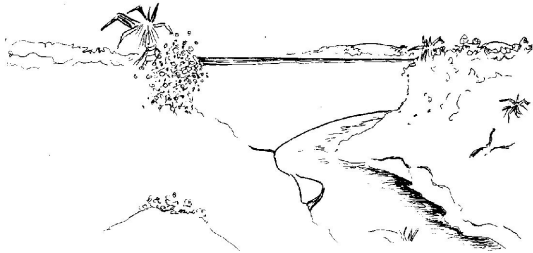
Since the death of Clinton Gage, 56 dingoes have been destroyed on Fraser Island. There were 28 in the immediate aftermath of the death and another 28 in the period since. In 2003 10 dingoes were destroyed. (2 @ Kingfisher Resort, 3 @ Lake McKenzie, 2 @ North Eurong and 1 each @ Central Station, Dundubarra and Happy Valley). The number of "dangerous" incidents reported increased from 55 in 2002 to 68 in 2003. This has been thought to be because the public was more willing to report incidents in 2003. In the meantime there is ongoing detailed research being carried out by the UofQ (Gatton) which revealing more data on the movement of the dingoes around the island. So far they have been able to tag 40 dingoes. These are now identified which will facilitate observing dingo behaviour more accurately.

Misinformed Malicious Rumours

Scurilous rumours have been circulated amongst FIDO opponents claiming an improper relationship between Dean Wells and John Sinclair. They have had consistent, but entirely baseless themes asserting that Sinclair has profited from his association with Fraser Island. The rumours are most rife amongst some ignorant 4WD enthusiasts. An E-mail to the Queensland Premier said, *"I been told about the close mateship that exists between these two and I have seen photos of them holidaying together on Fraser Island. I believe Sinclair was the radical who was successfully sued by Joh Bjelke-Petersen & fled interstate to avoid facing his responsibilities. I am told he has a very strong influence with Dean Wells regarding restrictions & future developments on Fraser Island. I have also been told that Wells has "given" the Sandy Cape lighthouse to Sinclair. Sinclair obviously expects to make huge amounts of money by being the only tour operator with access to large areas of Fraser Island thanks to his old mate Wells."*

Needless to say every one of the assertions is baseless. Sinclair has never been engaged in any discussions with Dean Wells about the Sandy Cape lighthouse and he is neither a large tour operator nor a beneficiary of any concessions by the Queensland Government. Sinclair and Wells never holidayed together on Fraser Island. They were only ever on Fraser Island together on 4 or 5 occasions — 2 or 3 were for weekend trips organized by the ALP in the 1980s and twice while he was Environment Minister. Sinclair was never sued by Premier Bjelke-Petersen. Sinclair sued Sir Joh for defamation only to lose on appeal. Sinclair met all responsibilities arising from that case and did not flee interstate to avoid anything.

The spiteful vitriol generated by such rumours resulted in some obscene graffiti on the "Maheno". Dean Wells is no longer Environment Minister. John Sinclair hadn't met John Mickel prior to his elevation to the ministry but doubtless some haters will create new myths to try to destroy FIDO's credibility.



More slugs: Another aquaculture plan for the Great Sandy Region involves a proposal to farm beche-de-mer (sea cucumbers) in Great Sandy Strait. It is claimed that there were once millions of them roaming over the mud and sandflats of Great Sandy Strait. The beche-de-mer were decimated by flooding in the 1990s which stirred up so much mud that the sea-grass died, and with them the population plunged. Sea ranching trials are about to get underway because the Chines are said to pay up to \$200 per kg for the flesh and their dried intestines can be worth up to \$1500 per kg from the Japanese.

New Mouth for Eli Creek: After extending its mouth northwards for some years Eli Creek has now cut a new mouth almost straight across the beach. The result is that the creek sides are very steep creating a more serious obstacle for beach traffic. Most Fraser Island visitors won't remember the 1973-74 period when exposure of beach rocks made travelling north

of Happy Valley along the beach almost impossible at any tide. At that stage long by-passes were needed to get around One Tree Rocks north of Eurong.

Report on the State of Conservation of Fraser Island

Last year the Commonwealth Government was required to report to the World Heritage Committee on the state of the (then) fourteen Australian World Heritage properties. They produced a 55 page document which tended to defend Australia's management by showing it in the best light to avoid international criticism. Fraser Island CAC members haven't been notified of the Report's existence. The following are some of the extracts from this report which provides information previously known to far too few.

On land tenure: Most of Fraser Island (over 155 000 ha) has now been gazetted as part of the Great Sandy National Park. The boundary of the Great Sandy National Park occurs at high water mark. The RAM Act therefore facilitates control of activities that occur on the beach, as the Fraser Island Recreation Area includes lands to low water mark.

Other lands on Fraser Island are a mixture of freehold land (approximately 370 ha), residual areas of the State Forest estate (approx 34 hectares, managed under the Forestry Act 1959) and Crown lands (approximately 1130ha, managed under the Land Act 1994).

Staffing: The number of staff based on Fraser Island has increased significantly over the 7 years from 24 in 1995-96 to 63 in 2001-02. During 2002, these staff members received a variety of training, including the use of firearms, fire management, workplace health and safety, first aid and CPR, advanced resuscitation, compliance and legislation, and enforcement. A campground ranger training workshop has also been delivered.

Field staff are supported by policy, planning and administrative staff primarily located in Maryborough and Brisbane. Volunteers and students on work experience placements also contribute to natural resource management. There are currently 12 volunteers registered as being available to undertake work on the Island.

On Budgets: RAM receipts collected have increased in 10 years jumping from \$1,475,000 in 1992-93 to \$4,132,761 in 2002-02.

Relevant Queensland Legislation: In Queensland, local government planning and development assessment and approval is currently undertaken in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1994 (the 'EP Act') and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (the 'IPA'). While the two Acts have different roles, they apply together to protect the environment and manage the processes and effects of development.

The IPA establishes a framework to co-ordinate and integrate planning and to manage development assessment at the local, regional and state levels so that development and its effects are managed in ecologically sustainable ways. This legislation took effect in early 1998.

Local Government: The Great Sandy WHA extends over two Local Government Areas - Maryborough City and Hervey Bay City. The Maryborough City IPA Planning Scheme was gazetted in March 2000. This scheme integrates and co-ordinates policies, actions, programs and information from the commonwealth, state, regional and local levels. At the commonwealth and international level it recognizes and protects World Heritage values associated with Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Strait through the incorporation of principles contained in the Great Sandy Region Management Plan and specific measures for Fraser Island South and the coastal townships. It achieves this aim through a number of stated Desired Environmental Outcomes (DEOs) which are assisted in their implementation by various local area strategies

(for example Fraser Island South Local Area and related Area Specific Codes).

The Hervey Bay City IPA compatible scheme is currently being finalised. (**FIDO:** *The Report fails to explain that this has been the case since 1996.*)

Reports on Some Studies

Optimisation of Sand Road Serviceability: QPWS is contributing to a Queensland University of Technology study being carried out by PhD student Kevin Wake-Dyster under the supervision of Dr A Gonetilleke (QUT), Prof F Bullen (University of Tasmania) and Mr L Fullerton (QPWS): "Development of a storm water management strategy for Fraser island based on sand and spatial characteristics to optimise sand road serviceability", a hydrologic and hydraulic study, undertaking material characterisation and pavement analysis, integration of hydrologic, hydraulic and pavement data and modelling have been completed.

Development of design and maintenance strategies for sand-based roads is currently being undertaken. The results of this study will be integrated into a sustainable transport study.

Fraser Island Desired Site Capacities Study (2002): This study (by EDAW (Aust) landscape architects and planners) provides much needed data on existing visitor use at 44 key day use areas on the island, and establishes capacities for these sites. The study also provides a simple repeatable methodology for establishing desired visitor capacities.

A Monitoring and Assessment Project has been developed for the Fraser Island WHA. Management outcomes have been addressed through a series of monitoring programs that address the desired outcomes of the 1994 Great Sandy Region Management Plan. The 63 sub-strategies in the management plan have been used as the basis for developing a comprehensive monitoring program, and specific monitoring projects have been developed for priority areas

Visitation to the WHA has increased from 211 000 people in 1991-92 to over 339 000 people in 2001-02. Much of this visitor activity is concentrated on high profile sites including Lake McKenzie, Central Station, and Eli Creek.

Tourism pressures: Visitation pressures include threats from associated development activities along with more direct impacts. These range from the impact of increasing tourist numbers, beach campsites, rubbish, vehicles and vehicle tracks on visual attributes of the area, the potential for people to climb on coloured sand cliffs and dunes, trampling around lake and creek edges and associated loss of riparian vegetation, movement of sand into lakes and creeks, species disturbance from the presence and behaviour of visitors (specifically recreational traffic and human use of creeks impacting on coastal wading birds, and interactions with humans is promoting dependant and aggressive behaviour from dingoes). The potential for changes to visitor experiences as visitor numbers increase (through overcrowding in high use areas and increased interaction between visitors in more isolated areas)

and so the potential for recreational succession and homogenisation in terms of visitor experiences was specifically highlighted as a threat to the diversity of opportunities that Fraser Island currently offers.

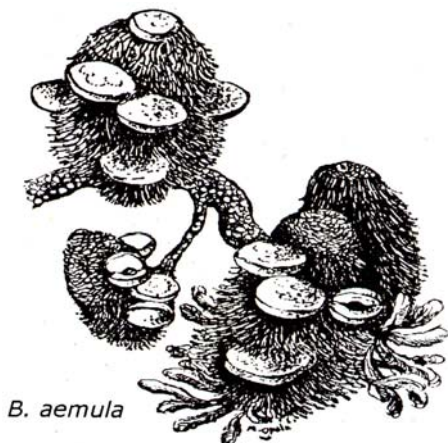
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

The World Heritage values for which Fraser Island World Heritage Area was originally listed remain intact. Management of the FIWHA has maintained the world heritage values. The two main threats to the values have been identified as being recreation and visitation, along with inappropriate fire regimes.

Knowledge gaps have been identified and will be addressed in future planning, management and research activities. Many projects designed to minimise the threats posed by increasing numbers of visitors to the island are underway. Key projects include the Fraser Island Transport Study, development of a camping management plan, and the implementation of the recommendations of the Desired Site Capacities Study. In addition, the continued development of appropriate visitor infrastructure will significantly enhance the capacity of QPWS to minimise and manage impacts. A Draft Fire Strategy has been prepared to provide direction for fire management on Fraser Island.

Proposed Future Actions: Key actions include the continued implementation of the recommendations of the review of tourism document, dingo management strategy, and desired site capacities study. In addition, it is anticipated that several current projects including the development of the camping management plan, review of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan, transport and access study and fire strategy will be finalised during the next 12-18 months.

Discussions are underway with relevant stakeholder groups to consider a possible future extension to the boundary of the property.



From "Sand Paper"

Last year the EPA introduced a new quarterly newsletter, "Sandpaper" describing some news relating to Fraser Island. We don't know its target audience and distribution. This follows the stopping of the monthly reports which used to be sent to all members of the various Fraser Island committees on the basis it took up too much staff time.

The following items were gleaned from "Sand Paper 2" distributed in January, 2004.

Whale shark: A 3 metre whale shark beached near Browns Rocks between Sandy Cape and Orchid Beach last summer. Although the shark was returned to the water, it beached itself

again and died two days later. There haven't been many previous records of whale sharks near Fraser Island.

Shearwaters: Recently, a large number of short-tailed shearwaters washed on to the beach on Fraser Island and on Teewah beach. Thirty-two birds (24 dead and 8 alive) were collected for examination. The live birds were in very poor condition with very thin flight muscles and only weighing between 400 and 500 grams (adult birds in good condition usually weigh between 530 and 560 grams). There are an estimated 18 million birds migrating past our coast each year and it is inevitable that we will get some dying along the way and washing up.

Work to Stop Sediment at Lake Allom: A sediment control project at Lake Allom involved the installation of flap drains to slow the velocity of water. This is to prevent sand moving off the road and into the lake. Several rows of silt fencing are now in place to slow the flow.

FIDO is impressed with the priority given to this problem. By March 2004 most of the silt traps were full and needed additions to stop silt overflowing. FIDO is waiting to learn the results of the testing of Lake Allom's water to establish the reasons for Allom algae bloom. These were scheduled for the Fraser Island wide water testing/sampling about March.

The lot of a ranger: "Sandpaper" provided this insight into the work of a Fraser Island Ranger:

Hectic 24 hours: Who says being a ranger on Fraser Island is a cruisy job? Here's an excerpt from a September Day the life of a Fraser Island ranger: Grinding graffiti off the Maheno, assisting in recovery of a bogged bus at Indian Head, caring for passengers organising food, ambulance and medivac chopper; recovering a bogged ambulance at Indian Head after dealing with the bogged bus incident, dealing with extreme waste management situations while rubbish trucks were off the road; conducting a midnight search for an intoxicated backpacker missing at Indian Head, while offering medical attention to another backpacker with a broken arm, being woken late at night and requested to intervene in a potentially violent conflict between campers; attending and monitoring a beached yacht on the western side and assisting the medivac team to get the skipper off the island.

Police file: Senior Constable Paul Lehfeldt created a sticker, which reminds people of the dangers of driving on the beach. The sticker shows a 4WD troop carrier on its roof. It carries the message: "**If only one passenger had said something! 7 flown to hospital, 3 head injuries, 1 ruptured intestine. Driver sentenced to 3 months jail. Don't let the driver spoil your holiday! Say something!**" It's to be stuck on the inside of the windscreen of hire vehicles where passengers can see the sticker and hopefully be encouraged to say something to a driver who's being stupid. This project is supported by most of the 4WD hire companies, the resorts at Kingfisher Bay and Eurong and Air Fraser. Preliminary posters on barges and in some shops around the island had been noticed and we've received positive feedback. Traffic flow seems to be improving on the beach. Odd complaints of bus drivers refusing to move or give way, both on the beach and on the inland roads, are still coming in. Police can't do anything with poor descriptions. Supply a description of the vehicle. Note things like registration, colour, company name and the time and place of the incident. We all need to remember – Normal road rules apply on the island.



News in Brief

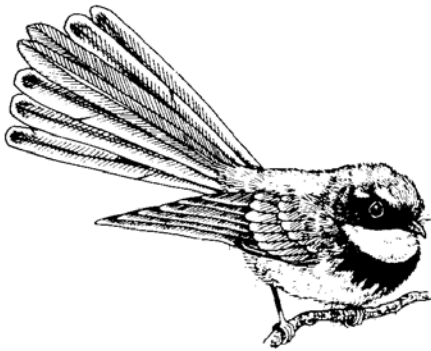
The plethora of issues bearing on the management of Fraser Island seems endless. These are just some of the many issues which have attracted our attention in recent months.

Jurisdiction for River Heads

In the Australian federation, many large corporations play off one state against another to extract the maximum number of public concessions. As a result, private projects frequently end up being subsidized from the public purse. It has happened regularly with concessions over electricity. It also happened when what is now Kingfisher Resort seduced the Maryborough City Council to approve the development at their North White Cliffs site, on the promise that if they did, the Resort would operate through Maryborough and not Hervey Bay which was much closer. At the time FIDO derided this absurdity, but the parochial Maryborough councillors swallowed that hook, line and sinker. The promised fast ferry down the Mary River wasn't even considered once approval for the resort project received the requisite approvals. We are therefore wondering how credible is the latest threat to relocate its ferry terminal from Mary River Heads to Rainbow Beach. They have plans for a 750 square metre terminal including a kiosk and public toilets, and a caretakers residence is proposed to be built on stilts over the water. The plans were almost a *faite accompli* after private negotiations with the Hervey Bay mayor but without consultations with the two aldermen representing the Mary River Heads area. When the aldermen protested about the lack of procedures, Kingfisher indignantly threatened to pull the rug out from under the \$1million project claiming, "We chose River Heads because of our association with the town".

FIDO has recently discovered a lack of transparency in Kingfisher's latest consultations with the Maryborough City Council over taking over a public reserve at Eurong.

30,000 Backpackers: Hervey Bay Council Mayor Ted Sorrensen claimed that 30,000 backpackers were attracted to Hervey Bay in 2003. FIDO believes that almost none go to Hervey Bay without also going to Fraser Island. But Fraser Island is also attracting an increasing number of backpacker visitors from Brisbane, Noosa and Rainbow Beach.



Another Beattie Promise for Fraser Island

Peter Beattie's Election policy on 28th January made another promise which if implemented should benefit Fraser Island. This time it was along with a promise to protect Queensland's "pristine rivers, the wild rivers, for generations to come. We will not build dams on Queensland's wild rivers. We will let the wild rivers run free in the interests of our children, our environment and our eco-tourism industry". In media briefings Fraser Island streams were identified as some of the

"wild rivers" to be protected. Certainly it would stop Hervey Bay City speculating that it could tap Fraser Island's water at some future date.

Fire Management in Public Service Hours

It is good news and a great achievement that the Fraser Island Fire Management Strategy has now been finalised. It is a bulky 200 page document. This is a positive move which FIDO advocated for more than a decade. It will drive fire management on the island. However, there is much more than a set of broad rules required.

FIDO is alarmed at the practice of public service hours defining when burning takes place and urges more sensitive ecological thinking. On Sunday, 29 August, 2003 FIDO was conducting a weeding bee at Eurong. That day the QPWS conducted a "controlled burn" for hazard reduction surrounding Dilli Village. The weather was very dry and crisp. The fire started at about 10.00 am and was burning intensely at 2.00 pm when we saw a dense pall of smoke. By 4.00 pm, it would have been extinguished. There were many staff in attendance and FIDO assumes that no overtime was necessary. This method of fire management is contrary to traditional Aboriginal burning method which FIDO supports.

Ecological Management Burns: FIDO believes that no management burns on Fraser Island should be conducted before 3.00 pm unless it is soon after rain when low intensity fires are possible. Fires should be lit late in the day when temperatures are much cooler. Without strong winds, fires lose intensity, usually extinguishing themselves by about 9.00 pm as the dew settles. Without wind, late afternoon fires usually have much lower intensity. That is the most desirable outcome. That is the method used in both Kakadu and other Northern Territory National Parks which have achieved excellent outcomes by pursuing traditional burning policies. Management fires should be self-regulating if suitable times and weather conditions are chosen. If ranger staff are required to be present, some changes to industrial awards may be needed to get Fraser Island's fire management practices right.

Effective fire management is an art. It is difficult to codify. The ART of fire management is only gained by experience. It probably took Aborigines countless years to refine their practices. We have to shorten that period very quickly if we are going to develop a healthy ecology on Fraser Island. Good fire management requires being finely attuned to all aspects of the local environment. So far, FIDO's advocacy for some in-service training for all island staff to make them more ecologically aware of the factors involved in burning is being resisted. Such a workshop has budgetary implications. The fact that it may save an enormous overtime bill if there is a wild fire was not taken into account.

EPA Volunteers Policy: Current QPWS rules prevent even "soft" research being conducted without resources being allocated to it. Even any volunteers wanting to assist the QPWS must have appropriate WH&S and induction training and be appropriately supervised. Committee to remain aware of policies for research. Discussion on the role of CAC and research as per Terms of Reference. CAC will pass any projects on to SAC that they consider important.

Federal funding – The mean Howard Government cut back funds available for to Fraser Island from over \$600,000 in 2001-02 to \$6,000 last year has agreed to provide \$15,500 towards the salary of an Executive officer. The delegation of distribution of very little NHT funding to local committees unsympathetic to the needs of World Heritage areas has been a disguised way to deliberately deny Fraser Island Federal funding.

Fuel Stove Area Only

For a number of consecutive meetings the Community Advisory Committee has advocated that Fraser Island should become a “Fuel stove area only”. This would mean the end of open fires which are the source of many management problems. Providing firewood for the open fires is currently costing about \$250,000 annually or 10% of the Fraser Island operational budget. \$100,000 is spent on purchasing the wood and about \$150,000 on trucks, drivers, fuel and ferry fees. (While some tour operators and even backpackers receive concessions on the ferries, the Environmental Protection Agency receives no concessions whatsoever for using the ferries although they are the biggest user of Fraser ferry services.)

Medivac Burn Victims: A less known outcome of open camp fires involves public safety. It is estimated that about 20 medical evacuations occur annually (over one per month) simply because people walk into open fires or where open fires have been. These have presented very serious cases fire

Queensland Pre-election Paralysis

It is difficult to catalogue the number of issues which were deemed “politically sensitive” which resulted in many issues critical to the better management of Fraser Island being stopped in their tracks during the 12 months prior to the election. The political paralysis included the following:

- **CAC:** Vacancies on the Community Advisory Committee including the Chair remained unfilled denying a full range of stakeholder representations. (Some vacancies have existed for more than two years). Advertisements inviting expressions of interest for these positions were finally placed in the Fraser Coast Chronicle and the Courier Mail on 14th February, one week after the State elections. Nominations closed on 15th March. When the vacancies are filled the committee should reach its full strength of 15.
- **RAM Act review:** It is more than three years since the amendment of the RAM Act was first foreshadowed. Most of the budget for Fraser Island is derived from RAM revenues and RAM regulations complement the Nature Conservation Act in providing a management framework for Fraser Island. So it is of more than just passing interest. However it was deemed “politically sensitive” and so no action was taken in 2003.
- **Great Sandy Region Management Plan Review:** It is a similar story with the this plan. In August 2001 Environment Minister Dean Wells promised that this plan would have a mid term review. So far that promise hasn't seen the light of day as far as the public is concerned and it has taken over two years to shuffle around the Environmental Protection Agency and other departments.
- **Great Sandy Region Marine Park:** This plan which was ready for release well before the election also stalled.
- **Transport and Access Study:** Whatever it is that was deemed to be too politically sensitive for this document to

be allowed to be proceeded with for over a year may never be known. What began as an inquiry to address a perennial and on-going problem on Fraser Island has been stalled and may never be resurrected. In the meantime the roads on Fraser Island continue to deteriorate along with anywhere affected by the sedimentation running off the roads at thousands of tonnes each downpour. FIDO's estimate that the last million visits to Fraser Island (roughly the aggregate for the last three years) has resulted in the relocation of over a million tonnes of sand seems no exaggeration when the total sedimentation from the whole road network over the last. That clearly isn't sustainable but because of “political sensitivity” we may never even discover any ways to ameliorate this ongoing environmental disaster. The option of developing a light rail system for the island may be forever stalled as it has been for the last 30 years simply because no politician will take the hard decisions to protect this World Heritage site when anything is deemed “politically sensitive”.

- **Camping Management Plan** has likewise been held in indefinite abeyance. That saves the EPA from having its hands tied and being required to adhere to a plan which could create difficulties for them such as closing the foredunes to free-camping. Likewise it allows infinite flexibility if there is no final established plan to adhere to.

News Briefs

Signs of the Times: Because about 30 vehicles had been towed on bad sections of Moon Point to Happy Valley Road it has been suggested that advisory signs be installed to inform people of alternative routes. Signage on gazetted road at the Maheno Wreck is also required. However it is not possible to enforce speed limits anywhere on the island unless speed limit signs conforming with main Roads specification is installed. This is a logistical difficulty on the beach.

Brumbies: The removal of the last of the feral horses from Fraser Island has been painfully slow and frustrated by some irrational opposition from a fanatical few. By the end of January only 2-3 small mobs remained and the project was hoped to be completed by end of February.

Dilli Village was handed over to Sunshine Coast University in February.

Greater powers for Rangers: In December Fraser Island Rangers were given wider powers to control behaviour of people on the island to control some activities such as camping on the beach. These will be wider than already possessed by Rangers under the dingo Management Plan.



Standards raise the costs: Having constructed the original Eli Creek boardwalk, FIDO has more than a passing interest in the nature of the boardwalks. While we believe that there has been some cost blow out the \$600,000 plus spent so far has upgraded less than half the length of the Eli Creek boardwalk. It cost FIDO \$9,000 to build the original in 1981. In response to FIDO's concern that many projects on Fraser Island seem to be over designed, the EPA has advised that all construction

conforms with the Building Code of Australia design specifications. The cost of building to such standards is now making many desirable projects unaffordable. For example, the standards for toilets rule out the option of the EPA ever providing any earth closet toilets even at remote sites with minimum use. Thus people are forced to “go bush” and dispose of their own human waste, (often in a less than satisfactory way). Thus not even a basic (even temporary) toilets can be provided to make more popular sites safer for free range campers. Similar expensive requirements mean that any new walking tracks have to conform to a standard which in many cases can't be justified. There appears to be no room for compromise.



CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Although Fraser Island is recognized as a world natural wonder, there are many aspects about it that have scientists and managers wondering. All aspects of Fraser Island will be on the agenda. Recent advances in scientific knowledge which may help to improve management of Fraser Island will be discussed and debated during the August conference at Noosa organized and hosted by the Fraser Island Defenders Organization.

The conference is titled: ***“A 2020 Vision for Fraser Island; a New Focus for the Great Sandy World Heritage Area”***. It will be held at the Noosa Lakes Resort, Noosa, Wednesday-Friday, 11th-13th August 2004.

The conference aim is to bring together management agencies from local, state and federal levels, stakeholders and interest groups to discuss the future of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy World Heritage Area.

The 1980's campaign to save Fraser Island's forests and subsequent World Heritage listing brought with them global recognition of Fraser Island and environs as an outstanding natural area and tourist destination. There is now a widespread perception that Fraser Island has been "saved". However, as our members are aware, steady growth in visitor numbers has placed unprecedented pressure upon this complex and sensitive environment.

The conference will provide the opportunity for delegates to examine trends in past, present and future demands and land use practices and to consider community expectations and the challenges we face to provide sustainable, balanced management of this unique resource.

Topics will include

- Planning & Management,
- Management of Visitor Impacts,
- Waste Management,
- Wildlife and Resource Management,
- Transport,
- Future Funding,
- Research
- Conservation,
- Indigenous Issues.

This is an exciting opportunity for members and supporters to become involved and all are encouraged to participate. The management committee welcomes any input and assistance from members. We look

forward to seeing you in August. Abstracts describing contributions are invited. Closing date for abstracts is **23rd April 2004**.

Anyone wanting to become involved or seeking more information, please email us at <2020@fido.org.au>

Fraser Island Defenders Organisation Limited

Notice of Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the Twenty Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited will be held at the Marchant Office, North Regional Business Centre, 960 Gympie Road, CHERMSIDE, **6.30 p.m., Wednesday, 4th August, 2004**.

BUSINESS:

1. To receive the Profit and Loss Statement, Balance Sheets and Reports of the Directors and Auditors
2. To elect Directors for the ensuing term in accordance with the Articles of Association.
3. General Business.

M&S

BY THE ORDER OF THE BOARD

Michelle Sinclair

Honorary Secretary

DATED this 10th day of April, 2004

PROXY FORM

27th Annual General Meeting

I,

(please print in BLOCK letters)

of

being a financial member of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization do hereby appoint

or failing him/her as my proxy, to vote on my behalf at the Twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting, to be held at 960 Gympie Road, CHERMSIDE, 6.30 p.m., **Wednesday 4th August, 2004** and at any adjournment thereof.

Signed this day of, 2004



URGENT

Section 248 of the Companies (Queensland) Code provides that all members be given 21 days notice of any meeting (including A.G.M.s) at which they are entitled to vote. It is important that as many proxies as possible are received. The Proxy Form is also taken as your apology for non-attendance. This form (or a copy) should be completed under Article 31 of the constitution. **If you cannot attend the meeting please photocopy this form and return it promptly** to reach Secretary, FIDO, PO Box 70, BALD HILLS QLD 4036, on or before 10th August, 2004

Nomination Form for FIDO Office Bearers

To be returned to Secretary FIDO, PO Box 70 BALD HILLS QLD 4034 by Tuesday, 3 August, 2004

We,and

being financial members of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization hereby nominate

for the position of for the 2004-05 term

Signed..... Nominator