



MOONBI 114

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

FIDO, "The Watchdog of Fraser Island", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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Since MOONBI 113

When MOONBI 113 went to press in August, FIDO had much on its plate. There was the confronting issue of firebreaks and more importantly the need to get the fire regime on Fraser Island into order.

The Fraser Island True Grit Conference held at the University of the Sunshine Coast at the end of September was one of the most positive events affecting Fraser Island since the Fitzgerald Inquiry into Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region in 1990. While it was a relatively small event in terms of participation, it produced some positive outcomes which look likely to be implemented in the foreseeable future.

Fire Policy: With a very active dialogue between USC, QPWS personnel, the NPAQ (who have offered \$4,000 to get the project established) and the Conference Keynote speaker, Dr Jeremy Russell-Smith, a fire research project was developed. Although this ultimately requires Commonwealth Government funding, there is optimism that this project would significantly improve the fire regime on Fraser Island. Meanwhile, FIDO is still waiting to see the results of the agreements reached on 29 July over future Fraser Island firebreaks in writing as promised.

Weeds: The conference, which focussed on the theme of "maintaining the natural integrity of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region", also had an interesting workshop on weeds. This enabled many of the main people interested in controlling weeds on Fraser Island to liaise and work out a strategy for better coordination of efforts. The main outcome that all interested parties are seeking is a permanent coordinator working on this project. In the meantime FIDO continues with working bees with more planned for 2007.

The conference was convened by the Scientific Advisory Committee and FIDO. The main disappointment was that no representatives from the Commonwealth Government nor representatives of Maryborough and Hervey Bay City Councils were present when they have such a significant impact. There wasn't a representative from the tourist industry either. There was no representative from the Tourism and Leisure Corporation which carries about 70% to 80% of the visitors to Fraser Island on commercial tours.

Queensland Elections: The Queensland Elections resulted in the Beattie Government being re-elected despite some appallingly bad decisions on the Queensland environment including, conspicuously, its pitiful role in protecting the Great Sandy Marine resources. MOONBI 114 shows that the Great Sandy's marine resources continue to be threatened by aquaculture projects and the government agency driving this wants to ignore FIDO completely. See pp 6 & 7

30th Anniversary End of Sandmining: It is 30 years since the Commonwealth Government intervened to end Fraser Island sandmining. It's 25 years since the first Australian sites went on the World Heritage List and 15 years since the end of logging on Fraser Island. Since those decisions, the Commonwealth interest in Fraser Island has languished appallingly and Fraser Island is now the Cinderella of Australian World Heritage sites. See pp2-4.

FIDO is entirely a voluntary organization. It has no staff and volunteers and people working in honorary capacities donate all work and efforts on its behalf. However, FIDO does need financial support to meet necessary expenses and to give us the resources to deal with the major issues and projects, to pursue research and campaigns to improve Fraser Island management.



Two backgrounders: With this issue of MOONBI we include two Backgrounders. FIDO has started recording what are known and demonstrable impacts of **climate change** on Fraser Island and the conclusions are most alarming. There are still many unknowns but the pace of climate change is outstripping all of the earlier predictions, and impacts are already observable on Fraser Island. The other backgrounder is a summary of the issues of **Integrity** and why the maintenance of Fraser Island's Integrity is vital to its World Heritage status.

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More Proof of Fraser's Cinderella Status

Despite being acclaimed and popular with the public, Fraser Island is consistently overlooked by politicians from all parties and of all political persuasions at both a state and national level. It is forgotten when it comes to handing out financial resources. It is the Cinderella of Australia's World Heritage sites and barely even gets the crumbs when it comes to the spending that the Commonwealth Government provides for the other Australian World Heritage properties. While the Federal Government was prepared to intervene and over-rule Queensland in 1976 in a most popular decision that saw the end of sandmining, it has virtually ignored it since.

Federal Disinterest: Although on 11th November 1976 (Hon Kevin Newman (father of the Brisbane Lord Mayor) told the Federal Parliament that Fraser Island would be nominated for World Heritage listing when the Convention was ratified by sufficient other countries, it was another 15 years before the Hawke Federal Government acquiesced to the Queensland Goss Government's request in 1991 to nominate Fraser Island for World Heritage listing. The Hawke Government generously contributed to the compensation package to end logging but in the next fifteen years, the Federal Government has provided little to ensure that the island is managed adequately to preserve its outstanding natural values. (See "Poor Relation" below.)

It is not just that the Commonwealth Government has forgotten Fraser Island financially, the present federal Environment Minister seems so disinterested that not only has he not bothered to see one of the greatest natural gems for himself but he has allowed his own Department to do a Pontius Pilate and virtually wipe their hands of any responsibility for it.

It seems that Federal bureaucrats are happy to play the three wise monkeys act over Fraser Island and manage it as a desk operation from Canberra where they see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing and do nothing. There is nothing to demonstrate that the Commonwealth Government has contributed anything to Fraser Island in the last five years. It doesn't even seem to be very helpful in advancing the renomination of Fraser Island for World Heritage listing.

Hard Hearted: In 1997 the Commonwealth Government's Australian Heritage Commission invited readers to nominate their favourite "Places in the Heart". Of over 3000 entries, Fraser Island was the most mentioned place followed by the Great Barrier Reef and Port Arthur. However, despite this widespread public affection for Fraser Island, it has become the most neglected and most under-resourced World Heritage site in Australia especially when compared with what the Commonwealth gives to other state-managed World Heritage sites and what it spends on its own Commonwealth-managed World Heritage National Parks.

No Political Recognition: Fraser Island's Cinderella status in Queensland was again re-enforced in November when Premier Peter Beattie conspicuously overlooked it when nominating five other "Smart State icons" for possible inclusion in the new *'Monopoly Australia Here & Now'* edition of the ever-popular board game. Premier Beattie chose Brisbane's South Bank cultural precinct, the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach, Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast, Surfers Paradise on the Gold Coast, and the Great Barrier Reef all ahead of Fraser Island. Judged on how the Beattie Government has treated Fraser

Island and allowed it to degrade during the last decade, Fraser Island would have been a doubtful contender even if he had been asked to nominate 100 Queensland icons.

Omitted from National and Queensland Heritage List: Making the World Heritage List seems to carry no weight when it comes to the National Heritage Register and the Queensland Heritage Register. In November when FIDO sought to identify the listing references for Fraser Island on the National Heritage List, we discovered that Fraser Island could make the World Heritage List but amazingly not make the National Heritage List. We have seen proposals to put Eurong Road on Fraser Island on the National Heritage List because of the uniqueness of the island's dingo population but this is just one of the myriad of aspects which justify its inclusion on the National Heritage List. Although a bureaucratic bungle stopped the listing of all of Australia's natural World Heritage sites including the Great Barrier Reef, these conspicuous omissions have not yet been rectified after two years.

Seeking a second best solution to where Fraser Island might have been recognized, FIDO turned to the Queensland Heritage List. Here we found that while Fraser Island was left off the list, the Sandy Cape Lighthouse was included. In Queensland the bias in the Heritage Register is not just against Fraser Island but it is against all natural areas. The Lamington Bridge in Maryborough is registered but not the Lamington National Park that is one of the major Queensland National Parks in the CERRA World Heritage area. While the terms of reference of the Heritage Council might so skew it in favour of the built environment that it has overlooked the most obvious contenders for natural heritage recognition, the fact remains that Fraser Island and other natural areas of Queensland remain as Cinderellas when it comes to official government recognition.



(Above & front page) Eli Creek 4 October 2006. There were over 80 vehicles including buses parked around this creek.

Coincidence of Anniversaries

November 2006 marked a series of very significant anniversaries for Fraser Island.

30th Anniversary — End of sandmining: It is 30 years since the delivery of the Final Report of the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry on 26th October 1976. Just two weeks later on the first anniversary of the Whitlam Government's dismissal (11th November), the Fraser Government announced in Federal Parliament that it had adopted the three key recommendations of the Report namely that export of all minerals mined from Fraser Island above the high water mark be banned after 31st December, 1976, that Fraser Island be inscribed on the Register of the National Estate (it became the first item to be inscribed on that list) and that a \$10 million compensation package be developed to offset any regional disadvantages and any contractors financially affected. In effect the last two months of 1976 marked the end of Fraser Island sandmining. At the time the Federal Environment Minister, Kevin Newman also told Parliament that when the World Heritage Convention became operational the Australian Government would nominate Fraser Island for listing.

25th Anniversary — Australia's World Heritage: Australia's first World Heritage listing occurred also in October 1981. Australia was one of the first signatories to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage and the first Australian sites - the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu National Park and the Willandra Lakes Region in NSW, were inscribed at the 5th session of the World Heritage Committee, held in Australia from 26-30 October 1981. The Australian Government announced that it would provide \$450,000 for a special photographic exhibition of the nation's 16 listed sites to be shown around the country.

15th Anniversary — Fraser Island's World Heritage Listing: Despite the declarations in Federal Parliament in 1976 that the Australian Government would nominate Fraser

Island for World Heritage listing, it took almost exactly another 15 years for that to happen. That was 10 years after the first Australian nominations. The reason for the delay was to appease Joh Bjelke-Petersen, a long time opponent to "*just one more inch of Queensland*" being nominated following his being over-ruled on the Great Barrier Reef nomination. During these fifteen years much old growth forest that might have avoided the axes, chainsaws and logging operations were mutilated for the timber industry.

Contrast: To mark these anniversaries FIDO has written to Federal Environment Minister, Hon. Senator Ian Campbell pointing out the marked contrast in the approach of the Commonwealth Government since the days in 1976 when Malcolm Fraser had acted in direct defiance of the then Queensland Government to stop sandmining and 2006, when the Howard Government has virtually denied any direct funding to this World Heritage site.

Celebrate with Light Rail: FIDO is seeking Federal assistance to facilitate a light rail on Fraser Island to make visitation to the island sustainable and to end the serious degradation which is now resulting from a fleet of more than 50 4WD buses which are churning up the sand tracks and creating untold degradation of the natural environment. Experts advise that this is both very feasible and very viable. FIDO thinks that in the debate over greenhouse emissions and energy conservation the Australian Government should also consider how much more energy-efficient a light rail on Fraser Island would be and so consider its role in making tourism much more sustainable.

FIDO has since put forward a proposal under the Heritage Grants program administered by the Federal Environment Department for a grant to undertake the design work necessary as a pre-requisite for proceeding with this light rail project.

The Feds and World Heritage

In announcing the Commonwealth's celebration of Australian's World Heritage sites, the Minister assisting the Environment Minister said that over the last 10 years, in addition to funds provided directly to Commonwealth managed sites, the Australian Government has provided more than \$110 million to the states and territories towards improving and managing our World Heritage properties. Of this less than 4% (only \$3,832,000) went to Fraser Island. \$50 million of this has gone to managing Tasmania's Wilderness site. Over \$20 million has gone to Queensland's Wet Tropics. (See Cinderella Status article for more detail).

Australia's 16 World Heritage properties

** = wholly funded by Commonwealth Government

= Special Commonwealth Government grant

Queensland: Great Barrier Reef, ** Wet Tropics of Queensland, Fraser Island, Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh) (Qld/ SA), Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (Qld/ NSW)

New South Wales: Willandra Lakes Region, Lord Howe Island Group, Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (Qld/ NSW), Greater Blue Mountains

Northern Territory: Kakadu National Park, **Uluru-Kata Tjuta**

Victoria: Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens

Western Australia: Shark Bay, Purnululu National Park

Tasmania: Tasmanian Wilderness, Macquarie Island

South Australia: Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Naracoorte) (Qld/ SA)

Offshore (Australian Government) Heard and McDonald Islands **

Expanding the List (and Fraser Island and Cooloola miss out again): If all goes to plan, the list will be expanded with the inclusion of Sydney Harbour's '*jewel in the crown*', the Sydney Opera House. A nomination for the site was submitted to UNESCO last January. FIDO continues to be frustrated by the excruciating delays in the process which will lead to the honouring of the undertaking to resubmit the Fraser Island and Cooloola World Heritage nomination which was the agreement reached with Environment Ministers Kemp and Wells on 14th May, 2002. The Fraser Island and Cooloola Values Report which substantiates the case to enlarge the area and recognizes that it meets four World Heritage criteria was prepared and delivered by the Queensland Government to the Commonwealth Government in 2002.

Fraser Island a POOR Relation

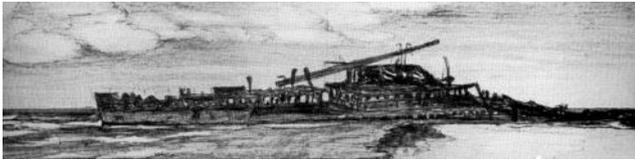
The data and evidence presented to the Senate Committee inquiring into National Parks and Marine Reserves well establish the neglect of Fraser Island and confirm just how poorly treated Fraser Island is compared with other World Heritage sites.

A reading of the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency Annual Report for 2004-2005 shows just how poorly Fraser Island fares in the financial stakes when compared with two wholly Commonwealth Government funded World Heritage National Parks.

In the 2004-05 financial year the total receipts collected from Fraser Island under the RAM Act was \$3,637,082. While receipts have fallen along with visitor numbers, they look poor by comparison with Uluru that garners more than twice the income with much higher fees. With capital expenditure and operating costs combined, the expenditure on Fraser Island annually amounts to only about \$6 million 60% of what is spent in Uluru and about 35% of what is spent on Kakadu management.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has an area of 132,566 ha, (slightly smaller than Fraser Island) and approximately the same volume of visitation. In the last complete financial year, the Commonwealth Government spent almost \$10 million to manage Uluru-Kata Tjuta World Heritage park in addition to almost \$2 million paid to the traditional owners. \$8 million was raised at the gate as a result of visitor fees that were increased in 2004 to \$25.00 per visitor.

While Kakadu National Park is ten times the size of Fraser Island, there are no visitor fees but visitor numbers are much lower than either Fraser Island or Uluru. Here the operating cost was \$17,244,000.



Welcome FIDO President

For the first time in 35 years, FIDO has a female President. Colleen Enchelmaier has been elected to replace Andrew Sinclair. They have effectively swapped positions with Colleen taking over the Presidency which Andrew's other commitments prevented him from handling as he believes the role deserves.

Ever since its foundation, women have played a very prominent role in helping FIDO in several notable achievements. The late Billie Watts was an indefatigable moving force for almost two decades. At one stage only one male was on the 7 person Executive. There have been many notable women as indicated by the number of women Life Members. So it is a welcome move that a woman should assume the Presidency. Colleen brings with her to the FIDO Presidency more than just time, enthusiasm and application. She brings with her a very talented daughter, Jane, who after serving on the FIDO Committee for the last two years has accepted the role of Treasurer, replacing Julie Bush. It is yet another family to carry on the great and proud traditions of FIDO after 35 years.

Turtle Study in Hervey Bay

The significance of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region as a marine turtle habitat is being continually upgraded. The numbers of nestings occurring in the Sandy Cape area seems to be growing. Now scientists are focussing on the behaviour of turtles in the whole habitat in the Great Sandy Region.

On 28th July *Caroline* was the first green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) living in Hervey Bay to be fitted with a radio tag (PPT) and released for tracking studies using satellite telemetry. Scientists are seeking to quantify the home range for adult green turtles in their foraging habitat within Hervey Bay. They also hope to identify the path and duration of the breeding migrations from the Hervey Bay foraging area to distant breeding areas and to find out much more about these migrations and their general living habits.



143kg *Caroline* was captured at low tide within the mangrove lined estuary of Allerton Hill Creek in Great Sandy Strait between Urangan and Mary River Heads. When examined she indicated that she would be mating and nesting in the 2006-2007 breeding season.

For the first seven weeks after her capture, she spent her time foraging across the intertidal and subtidal seagrass flats within 4km of her capture site. She then commenced her breeding migration on 7th September by moving northwest out into Hervey Bay. MOONBI hopes to be able to provide a further summary as more information gained from the tracking of *Caroline* becomes available.

Water Extraction from Fraser Island

One paper which was proposed for the "True Grit" Conference (but wasn't presented) was to deal with Fraser Island's groundwater resource and how to manage the extraction of freshwater from it and the disposal of effluent to it. The proponent of the paper lamented that while some studies have provided a basic investigation, a detailed hydrological study of Fraser Island's groundwater resources hasn't yet occurred and that the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* placed a moratorium on extractions of the groundwater. Some stakeholders believe that the lack of basic information on Fraser Island's hydrology is an impediment to the sustainable management of this resource. What proponents for more scientific examination of the island's water resource overlook or refuse to accept is that there is now no longer any proposal to extract water from Fraser Island and therefore the need to explore this resource scientifically with a view to its future management is wholly irrelevant.

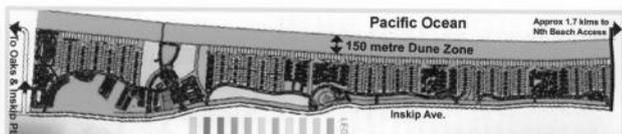
Horrendous Inskip Peninsula Development Proposal

The proposed urbanization of the Inskip Peninsula has huge implications for Fraser Island and the whole of the Great Sandy Region. It is proposed to urbanize all of the old littoral forest land between the Inskip Point road and the beach for five and a half (5.5) kilometres between the existing Rainbow Shores development and Bullock Point.

This development proposal, which is seeking approval while still in a “concept” stage, would permit 1,140 houses, 1,030 apartments, 360 resort units, 700 resort rooms and add 6,523 people to the population of Rainbow Beach. It would also cover 25 acres with roads. All of this is proposed for land that is included in the proposed World Heritage renomination of Fraser Island and Cooloola which was agreed to by the State and Federal Environment Ministers some years ago and which is only being delayed by the queuing process for Australian World Heritage nominations. Being a “concept”, means that the developer would not be bound by the exact proposal put forward.

There are many things wrong with the application including that what has been presented, as flawed as it is, is still only a “concept” plan and this can be subsequently varied with no further public consultation or rights to object. Apart from the fact that it proposes to allow for a population greater than the available unallocated water of the Cooloola Council could supply, it also will require more sewage treatment capacity than the Council has allowed for. Cooloola Council has already approved developments in Cooloola Cove that will suck up most of the water available from the Council.

Although the development is set back 150 metres from the existing eastern shoreline, the strip involved is about 500 metres. It would have more than 24 streets running at right angles from a service road parallel to Inskip Avenue. All traffic would have to flow to and from the subdivision along Inskip Avenue which is now the principal means to access both the Fraser Island ferries and the Inskip Point Recreation Area which in itself draws 3000 campers there at peak holiday periods. Despite the linear development, there is no provision for formal beach access or any provision to restrict informal beach access. This and the arrangements of blocks facing the sea along this entire 5.5 kilometre frontage will inevitably mean the degradation of the dunes. It also has implications for other beach users and huge implications for Rainbow Beach’s infrastructure

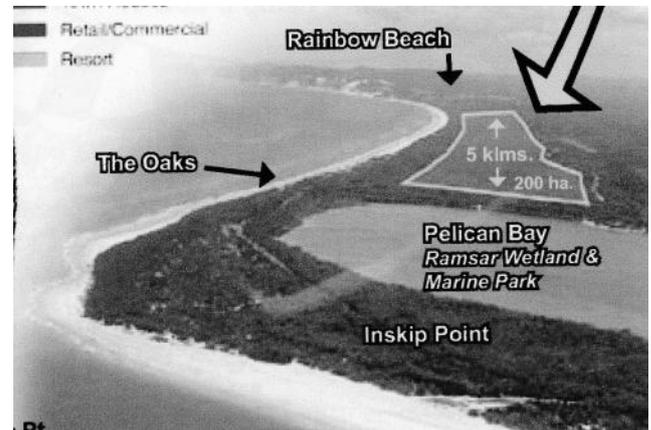


This large natural open space corridor connects Rainbow Beach and the Cooloola Section of the Great Sandy National Park with Fraser Island. This lovely pristine forest escaped the ravages of sandmining and now seems destined belatedly to fall to the bulldozer if the Cooloola Shire Council and the Commonwealth Government approve applications now before them from the developers of Rainbow Shores. Most of it has never been cleared for sand mining and consists of old growth on the original dune structure. Its visual and environmental values are very significant to local ecology, tourism and lifestyle.

The land is state-owned. It is not freehold. It is a 30-year-old development lease granted in 1987 to replace the former Murphyores mining lease. While development might have been anticipated, the lease bestows no rights or guarantees. The lessee must still obtain all necessary approvals and permits for development. Legal refusal of any necessary approval does not incur compensation.

FIDO will be joining other conservation groups in opposing the development because of the impact it will have on the Great Sandy World Heritage landscape values, the adjoining Marine Park and Ramsar Wetlands and on a unique area of South East Queensland open coastal space.

Elsewhere with this MOONBI FIDO has produced a map showing the land which will be lost if the sea level rises by just one metre as a result of climate change. It covers all of the land subject to this application. The ancestral bed of the Mary River runs right below the subject land. All of this land was created about 5,500 years ago when the sea level fell by just one metre. All of it can be expected to be lost to the sea as a result of the predicted sea-level rises and higher wind velocities. Such a rise in sea levels is imminent and it seems that private interests are seeking to maximize private profit before the public starts to become aware of the full impact of climate changes. While it offers private gains, this proposal is very clearly contrary to the public interest.



Eurong Sewage

On another local government issue, Maryborough City Council has advised that they have obtained a \$6.4m State Government grant to develop a Eurong sewerage scheme with construction following the mid-2007 completion of the design. The Council is inviting written comments on the proposed scheme. FIDO has sought to be involved because the construction has implications for either aiding the dispersal of weeds in Eurong or bringing them under better control. It is ironic that this scheme is being installed within a kilometre of the recently upgraded QPWS sewage upgrade funded by a different arm of the Queensland Government.

Proposed Great Sandy Aquaculture Plan

In November FIDO became abruptly aware of the plans of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPIF) to develop a regional aquaculture plan for the Great Sandy. Although the plan lists its consultation strategy and has as its first objective “to ensure interested community groups and organizations are aware of the planning process and how they can be involved”, FIDO only heard about it by accident in November 2006, more than 15 months after the process had begun.

The plan was almost a *faite accompli* before FIDO even learnt of its existence. This was when Wal & Trisha Franklin, who are studying whales in Hervey Bay, threatened legal action over some of their data being misrepresented. The plan is supposed to be released in “early 2007” and the plan and “allocation policy” is scheduled to be finalized in mid-2007. So much for the Beattie Government’s community consultation!

Although FIDO has been the most conspicuous and active environmental advocate for Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region for the past 36 years, it seems that the DPIF has engaged in a deliberate attempt to by-pass FIDO and other organizations which may ask hard questions about the DPIF’s role in actively facilitating aquaculture without a full consideration of all aspects of the public interest. It seems that other non-profit voluntary conservation organizations that came together last year to establish the Greening of the Great Sandy coalition have also been by-passed as the DPIF engages in some sham “community consultation”.

There is a new mood afoot within the DPIF to become gung-ho in pushing aquaculture industries in the Great Sandy Region. It is unashamedly abandoning the traditional role of the public service to act in the public interest and they have now become the active agents and advocates for private interests who have a stake (or seek a stake) in the fishing industry. The DPIF seems intent on ignoring any pleas for conservation and the establishment of the wisest use of the marine resources of the Great Sandy Region as they push for new aquaculture opportunities in the Great Sandy Region Marine Park.

Worst of all they are determined to do this with as much secrecy as possible whilst maintaining a pretence that the process was fair and transparent. Transparency is conspicuously absent from the DPIF’s manoeuvrings. The Fraser Island Community Advisory Committee has consistently sought over many years to have representatives off the DPIF brief them on the marine resources of the Great Sandy Region but all invitations have been declined.

Assisting Great Sandy Pearl Farmers: The DPIF have unapologetically assisted Coral Sea Pearls Pty Ltd to establish a pilot scale 20-hectare Akoya pearl farming site in the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar site adjacent to the mouth of Bogimbah Creek. This development managed to get EPBC approval very cannily by lodging an EPBC application in June and then withdrawing it only to resubmit it in December when most people had their attention focused on Christmas. Unfortunately a copy of the proposal and what was approved is not available through the normal EPBC processes. However, FIDO has heard reports that the DPIF have agreed that this pearl farm can use the World Heritage area as a resource.

While the DPIF claims that the strictest environmentally sustainable aquaculture practices in the world are being applied to Dave Williams’ Coral Sea Pearls to protect the pristine environment of the Great Sandy Straits, the conditions applied to this pearl farm remain unknown to FIDO and other groups concerned with the values of the Great Sandy Region.

Environmental impacts: FIDO is unaware of all of the potential environmental impacts of pearl farms or scallop ranches but the secrecy over the way these industries have made their appearance in Hervey Bay suggests that people want us never to be able to learn what the environmental impacts might be. We know of applications for pearl farms being rejected by the New South Wales Government and that suggests that they are not necessarily environmentally sound. Knowing of the decline of the Japanese pearl industry and having seen reports of potential impacts, we don’t share the same optimism as the DPIF over the future of Great Sandy Strait if it is given over to even more pearl farms. A similar situation applies to the scallop ranching trial sites in Hervey Bay. There are other considerations that we need to address including the sterilization of large blocks within the bay and the strait. The infrastructure established to pursue these industries and the environmental impact of the infrastructure and harvesting procedures may be greater than the impacts of the actual production.

Green Groups Cut Out: The DPIF couldn’t have been unaware of FIDO’s interest because it was proceeding with this aquaculture plan while FIDO and other conservation organizations were working as a coalition for “Greening the Great Sandy”. It was apparently the implacable support of the DPIF for commercial fishing, which resulted in such an appallingly small 3.4% of the Marine Park being set aside as a no-take zone. One has to ask why, knowing that the voluntary conservation movement has a deep interest in the issue, the DPIF has denied this sector any say in the shaping of the aquaculture plan.



FIDO has campaigned for the wisest use of the natural resources of Fraser Island for 36 years. FIDO’s interest though extends over the whole of the Great Sandy Region. FIDO wants to be included in the process of public consultation for the Great Sandy area. We want to be assured that the DPIF fully takes into account all environmental issues,

Fin Fish Management Plan???

On another front, Queensland's DPIF is engaged in developing a Management Plan for finfish from Cape York to the New South Wales border. Again FIDO has every reason to be cynical about the intentions of the DPIF because in 1996 (Yes! A full decade ago) FIDO made a comprehensive submission when it was proposed to establish a "Subtropical Inshore Finfish Management Plan". Absolutely nothing eventuated from that process in which we invested a lot of effort. Despite FIDO's contribution to that plan, we have not even been contacted by the DPIF even though they so belatedly propose another attempt for a Finfish Management Plan that involves the Great Sandy Region's major fishery but under a different title.

Queensland's east coast fin-fishery is the state's largest and most diverse fishery. Its coastal and estuarine waters are home to the widest range of fished species in Queensland. Users include more than 750,000 recreational fishers and approximately 500 commercial operators. The major species taken include barramundi, mullet, bream, whiting, flathead and some lesser mackerels such as spotted and grey mackerel.

Over 1200 people attended 41 meetings held along the East Coast. Unfortunately the location and timing of the meetings prevented FIDO being represented and as yet the reports of the meetings in South East Queensland have to

be posted on the web. FIDO now awaits the questionnaire about more specific aspects of the fishery to be developed and distributed throughout the state in the near future.

The questionnaire comments will be used to develop a draft management plan that is likely to be produced mid-2007. FIDO hopes that this time there will be an outcome which will be more successful in managing the Great Sandy Region's fishery than the Great Sandy Region Marine Park (Northern Section) is and that we won't have to wait for years with no result as happened last time this exercise was undertaken.

Fish stocks to collapse within 50 yrs

More action is needed to save global fisheries

While the QDPIF has been dithering over Management Plans for Queensland fisheries and pushing the barrow for aquaculture ventures for the past decade, the state of fisheries around the world now have scientists ringing alarm bells very loudly protesting against the over-exploitation which has been rife especially in the last 100 years when cheap energy has facilitated the ravaging of every part of every ocean. An international team of scientists says global fish stocks may be wiped out within 50 years if ocean species continue to be lost at their present rate. Credible researchers claim that if nothing is done to reverse the trend, the world's fisheries will be empty by 2048.

In an analysis of scientific data going back to the 1960s and historical records over 1,000 years, the researchers found that marine biodiversity - the variety of ocean fish, shellfish, birds, plants and micro-organisms - has declined dramatically, with 29 per cent of species already in collapse. Extending this pattern into the future, researchers predict catches to decline 90 per cent from the maximum catch. This applies to all species, from mussels and clams to tuna

and swordfish. Ocean mammals, including seals, killer whales and dolphins, are also affected.

The decline in marine biodiversity is largely due to over-fishing and destruction of habitat. However the scientists agree that it's not too late to act and claim that with marine reserves in place, fishing near the reserves can improve as much as four-fold.

COMMENT: Why was the Beattie Government ignoring this science when they established the Great Sandy Region Marine Park with only 3.4% allocated as no-take zones?



No sea cages for Great Sandy Region

When the 6000 square kilometre Great Sandy Region Marine Park (Northern Section) was announced in April, there was a public statement that intensive sea cage aquaculture was prohibited under the zoning plan. The announcement said that although parts of the region were considered suitable for fish farms - or sea cage aquaculture - and the environmental impact was considered moderate, it had decided to prohibit the practice.

However the government committed itself to aquaculture. It declared that that would be limited to rack and line and

ranching methods for oyster, scallop and sea cucumber production because *"There is enormous potential for the cultivation of high value, low-impact products such as edible oysters, pearl oysters, and scallops"*. Predictions were made that 1,250 jobs could be generated in this area alone over the next decade if the sea ranching and rack and line marine aquaculture sectors are allowed to grow. It was stated, *"Queensland offers a host of advantages for marine aquaculture production and processing including, clean, unpolluted waters and proximity to major seafood markets in the Asia-Pacific region."*

Update on Fraser Island Dingoes

A couple of disturbing incidents recently when young children have been threatened or attacked by Fraser Island dingoes have some people demanding that all dingoes be exterminated. Others want to lock up all Fraser Island dingoes in a reserve and to set up feeding stations. Fraser Island dingoes are now recognized as being the most genetically pure dingoes or Asian Wolves in the world and they are one of the World Heritage values that need protection.

One of the attacks in September occurring in front of Eurong resulted the identified dingo being shot. QPWS staff believes that the dingo involved was one that had been fed by people in the Eurong village where it was regularly seen near the houses of the Second Valley. A well-equipped amateur photographer, Walther Van Alphen, photographed the actual incident. Walther was observant enough to see the start of the interaction that resulted in the dingo seriously biting one of the two young girls who were playing on the beach despite the desperate efforts of the parents to protect their children. He was also kind enough to make a series of shots available for FIDO to use in MOONBI.



Dingo attack at Eurong

The second attack occurred at night at Happy Valley on 21st November when a 2 year old toddler wandered alone outside the a house and was said, according to headlines, to be “lured into Fraser Island bush by a dingo”. Four men who heard his screams from a nearby barbeque are credited with saving his life.

The latest two well-publicized attacks have resulted in a spate of prognostications from a number of self-appointed “experts” about what should be done about dingoes. The most prominent of these is Fred Williams who claims that the problems are only arising because the dingoes are “starving”. He wants them locked away and fed as in a zoo. This advice is being accepted by a number of others but it is contrary to the conclusions of the people who have undertaken the most comprehensive dingo studies.

Almost all the dingo attacks now occur in or near places where humans are known to feed them. This is usually in the townships. There have been no attacks in the bush.

Culling

There was an initial “cull” of 31 Fraser Island dingoes immediately following the attack that resulted in the death of Clinton Gage at Waddy Point more than five years ago. Since then the QPWS has been working relentlessly to reduce the habituation of dingoes that results in them

becoming aggressive to humans. The effectiveness of this policy is best demonstrated by the very significant decline in the number of dingoes that have been subsequently shot because they have been judged to be “Aggressive/Dangerous”. In the past five years, 46 dingoes have been put down without any indication that this has reduced the aggregate population. Past studies indicate that about 100 dingoes each year will die out to be replaced by another generation to maintain a static but dynamic population varying from 100 to 200 animals depending on when the count is done — in early spring just after the year’s pups are whelped or in early winter when all of the pups are weaned. The latter is when many which can’t establish a territory for themselves will die.

The Dingoes Culled

2001 (Not part of the main cull)	4
2002	14
2003	10
2004	10
2005	3
2006	5

Almost all of the dingoes destroyed recently have been habituated in or adjacent to human settlements. Of the five shot in 2006, two were at Eurong, one each at the Maheno, Happy Valley and Orchid Beach. It is claimed that all of these dingoes became aggressive because they had been habituated to receiving very regular food from humans.

Another Dingo

A Toowoomba resident, and Fraser Island fan, Frank Early, sent us this photo of a dingo.



What is remarkable is that this photo wasn’t on Fraser Island or even in Australia. It was taken at Pattaya, Thailand. It strongly demonstrates that the dingo which is known from Israel to Australia by various local names (including Papuan dogs in New Guinea) are all really Asian wolves *Canis lupus* (dingo). Almost everywhere else within their original range, Asian wolves have hybridized. The purest specimens are on Fraser Island.

What to do about Indian Head

FIDO's increasing concern over the degradation of Indian Head has reached the stage of ALARM.

When FIDO was formed at the beginning of 1971, there was a lawn of couch grass extending to the very summit of Indian Head. There would have been only a few square metres of rhyolite rock exposed about 20 to 100 metres back from the precipice but the rest was short grass cropped by brumbies. We now know that the soil the lawn was growing in was very thin and as hundreds of thousands of feet have pounded their way up and down this steep slope each year, the grass has been trampled out and the thin skeletal soil progressively washed away exposing an ever increasing surface of bare rock. This is accelerating the rate of rain run-off with the result that the problem of exposure of more bare rock becomes self-exacerbating.

Self-exacerbating Erosion: While the worst of the area of rock exposure is greatest near the top of Indian Head, the depth of erosion is much greater on the tracks lower down leading from both the beaches to the north and south of the base. Here the soil was much deeper and so is the gouging. The deep and ever-widening scars are visible from a considerable distance. Apart from being a visual eyesore and an unacceptable environmental impact, these tracks up the steepest part of the climb are now hazardous and risky. Despite this Indian Head is a magnet to an ever-increasing number of Fraser Island visitors and closing it to public access to enable it to rehabilitate seems to be a practical impossibility.

Visual Blight: The degradation of Indian Head is the most conspicuous blight on the management of Fraser Island. Public safety and environmental concerns demand that making access to Indian Head safer and sustainable be addressed URGENTLY.



Massacre Site: Indian Head has a special significance to Butchulla people because in the Christmas – New Year holiday break in 1851, a group of Maryborough settlers sworn in as “special constables” to the native police set out to arrest some Aborigines for which there were warrants. They spent eight days on Fraser Island carrying out what was euphemistically described as “examinations” of Aborigines. Subsequent reports indicate that this was pretence for a series of massacres that occurred between Christmas Eve and 3 January. Aboriginal oral history reports that the biggest massacre was at Indian Head. The “Moreton Bay Courier” subsequently described this as a “jaunt” covered with “*extraordinary secrecy*” and that “*rumours are afloat that natives were driven in to the sea, and there kept as long as daylight or life lasted...*”

For the above reasons there is some uncertainty amongst modern Butchulla about what should be done to ensure that the memory of those who died at Indian Head and in other atrocities might be commemorated. This uncertainty has caused the management of Indian Head to be put into the “too hard basket” and nothing has been done to stop the continuing degradation of this most conspicuous and pivotal landmark on Fraser Island. FIDO is now working with the QPWS to see what might be done to address and repair the degradation and respect the significance and history of the site for the Butchulla people.

Cleaning up Fraser Island

The transfer stations of the two City Councils are of an equivalent disgusting standard and don't match the waste transfer stations established on Fraser Island by the QPWS. It appears that the two Councils are trying to avoid their responsibility by making their waste transfer stations as inconspicuous and as far out of the way as possible hoping that residents will take their rubbish to the QPWS bins that are a long way out of the villages. However because QPWS transfer stations are obvious from the beach, the EPA is still footing the bill for removing urban rubbish from the island. The Council dumps are a disgrace particularly the Happy Valley and Orchid Beach dumps. Both councils need to accept they have a responsibility to manage the waste generated in the urban communities within their respective jurisdictions and not hope that others will pick it up. Making the transfer stations more easily accessible and tidying them up would be a useful first step in fulfilling their civic responsibility.

The (Another) Fire That Got Away

One of the realities of managing large natural ecosystems such as Fraser Island is that there is always the possibility of wildfires resulting from lightning strikes. One of the reasons for the Aboriginal burning regime that prevailed in Australia for tens of thousands of years was to minimize the devastation resulting from such wildfire and to enable them to survive. FIDO has been concerned that at the rate of burning in 2005, it would take at least 500 years for all of Fraser Island to be burnt once and even in 2006 only 1% was scheduled for management burns. In mid November a lightning strike set off a fire that burnt on a five-kilometre front and burnt for a week before being brought under control. FIDO is yet to learn the full extent of the fire. Unless the rate of fuel reduction is accelerated dramatically a much more catastrophic fire on Fraser Island can be predicted with reasonable reliability.



Hail the size of golf balls battered and bruised some beach walkers south of Eurong in mid November. A resident of 30 years said it was only the second time she had seen hail on Fraser Island. Any such aberrations in Fraser Island's climate need to be noted.

Fraser Island Visitation

Table 1

Fraser Island Visitation Percentages

Year	FIT's	VCT	Total	CTs%
2002	153,847	199,424	353,271	56.5%
2005	86,656	174,057	260,713	66.7%
% Change	-43.7%	-12.3%	-26.3%	N/A

FIT = Free & Independent Travellers
VCT = Visitors on Commercial Tours

Table 1 shows the changes in visitor numbers to Fraser Island in percentage terms. The main elements to note are that from the 2002 to the 2005 years:

1. Aggregate visitation fell by 26.3 %
2. Independent traveller (private 4WDs) visitation declined by a dramatic 43.7%
3. Visitors on commercial tours dropped by only 12.3%
4. The percentage of Fraser Island visitors carried on commercial tours rose in three years from 56.5% of all Fraser Island visitations to 66.7%.

These statistics indicate the importance of the commercial tours on Fraser Island and why there needs to be such a strong focus on better management of commercial operations.

TIPA on Fraser Island

A process is now being applied to how to better manage commercial tourism on Fraser Island with a study of Tourism in Protected Areas (TIPA). A working party of representatives of various members of the SAC & CAC (but without a representative from FIDO or any other conservation organization) has been working on establishing how tourism might operate on Fraser Island. The Working Group during the past year has spent many days on the process and visited every site of significance on Fraser Island. It has prepared a Draft Report but will be subject to lengthy debate in the New Year by the CAC (unlike the revisions to the Management Plan).

The TIPA Process seems to have as an objective permanently prescribing commercial access to operators to specific sites under terms and conditions yet to be defined /revealed. It will provide security of tenure for some operators and permanently lock out others.

FIDO is most anxious that the TIPA process will not be yet another repeat of the over-allocation of resources as has happened with the fishing industry, the timber industry and water allocation to irrigators.

New Postal Address

In the 36-year since FIDO was formed we have had several addresses. We have held PO Boxes at Maryborough, Red Hill, West End, Bald Hills and now TOOWONG. It may be a bit confusing but there have been remarkably few changes in the personnel on the FIDO Executive over the period but changes in circumstances require this entirely voluntary organization to make some changes to enable us to operate more effectively. Please note our new address:

PO Box 909 TOOWONG Q 4066.

Another backpacker vehicle capsizes

Despite the headlines that a tourist bus had crashed at Hook Point on 29th November it was nothing of the sort. It was a backpacker driven "troopie". It happened along the Hook Point to Dilli Village road. All of the eleven Korean tourists were in their early 20s. They had hired the vehicle but did not have an experienced driver to handle the terrain. Three emergency services helicopters transported five of the more seriously injured passengers – suffering concussion, back and wrist injuries to hospitals. The remaining six "walking wounded" passengers were treated at nearby Hervey Bay Hospital.



Although a tour operator said, "We often get these first-timers who haven't been off-road and are used to the city and they don't know what a dirt road is", the accident will result in calls from some Fraser Island users to keep the beach from Hook Point to Dilli Village open on the grounds that the road alternative is too dangerous. While most people would prefer to drive along the beach whenever possible, there are compelling environmental reasons why this beach needs to be closed. The more serious issue, which continues to be ignored by the Queensland Government, is what to do to stop inexperienced backpackers coming to grief and imposing additional loads on taxpayer funded medical and emergency services.

Managing backpacker visitation has long been recognized as a particularly troublesome management issue but so far it has been a nettle that has been too prickly for the Government to grasp.

Never Smile at a Crocodile (Story)

The Climate Change Backgrounder describing the environmental impacts of global warming doesn't specifically mention the migration of more species such as crocodiles into the Great Sandy Region. However, while hitherto the region has been the southern limit of the range of Estuarine Crocodiles which are mainly only summer migrants, people should start to expect to see many more crocodiles into the future. Most seen so far have been sub-adults (waters are as yet too cool to be considered by breeding adults). Sightings so far are anecdotal but the numbers and credibility of reports are increasing. While there has been skepticism about an alleged sighting of a crocodile basking on Fraser Island's Ocean Beach and photographed by Korean tourists, (It was claimed to have been a model) other sightings of a crocodile from the Urangan Pier and another in a tidal-mangrove area of Great Sandy Strait sound most authentic.

