



MOONBI 115

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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ISSN 0311 - 032X

9th May, 2007

Since MOONBI 114

MOONBI 114 went to press in December but regrettably since then there has been negligible progress in improving the management of Fraser Island.

There has been no response from the Federal Government Our letters to Ministers go ignored and unacknowledged. Significant Fraser Island anniversaries such as the end of sandmining 30 years ago and its World Heritage inscription 15 years ago also went unacknowledged.

We have done a little better on the State front. At least some of our letters do get acknowledged but there is a degree of arrogance and/or intransigence at government level. Perhaps this is best epitomized by the fact that the QPWS deferred the combined meetings of the Fraser Island World Heritage Scientific and Community Advisory Committees for two months. This is despite the dates for this annual event being set 12 months in advance. The QPWS said that the change was "unavoidable" but no other explanation has been given for stalling for a full two months.

Fraser Island's Carrying Capacity: For months the QPWS has been working on assessing the carrying capacity of several sites on Fraser Island while conspicuously ignoring the carrying capacity of the present infrastructure to get visitors to the sites which have been assessed. A report due for discussion in December is still under wraps and the process is rapidly losing credibility.

Indian Head: At the beginning of November FIDO representatives met with Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr to propose a massive voluntary project to coordinate the rehabilitation of Indian Head which is the most conspicuous landmark on the whole of Fraser Island. It is also probably Fraser Island's most degraded site.

Marine Issues: FIDO is becoming increasingly anxious about the Great Sandy marine environment surrounding Fraser Island. FIDO was disappointed with the Marine Park zoning which set aside an abysmal <4% as a green (No-take) zone. FIDO has been conspicuously shut out of Fin-fish Management Plan discussions. In the meantime the Beattie Government keeps blindly charging ahead to construct the Traveston Dam on the Mary River without knowing (or apparently caring) about its environmental impact. FIDO has at least been able to present our views to a Senate Committee inquiring into the dam impacts. (See p4) We have been included in discussions preparatory to the development of a Draft Aquaculture Management Plan for the Great Sandy. However it seems that this is likely to propose a scattering of aquaculture projects throughout the Great Sandy rather than concentration. There isn't much good news here. (See p7)

The President reports on how Fraser Island has fared in the last year (see pp2-3). It isn't a glowing report of progress. Nor are the stories on the lack of information (p 8).

It is amazing to see that thousands of allegedly rough & tough 4WD drivers are baulking at having to drive on a rough gravel road on Fraser Island and are inventing excuses for why 18 kms of beach should remain open. (See p 9)

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.



FIDO Inspection Team at Dilli Village April 07

Backgrounders: With this MOONBI, FIDO has included three more backgrounders: One deals with a history of land alienation on Fraser Island in the 20th Century. It is important to appreciate how less than 1% of the island which is freehold or leased impacts so heavily on the remainder. The backgrounder on flora hopes to promote a better understanding of what grows where and why and also promote the wider use of Aboriginal tree names. A third backgrounder helps to explain why and how the Traveston Crossing Dam will impact so heavily on Great Sandy Strait.

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A Review of the Year on Fraser Island

FIDO President, Colleen Enchelmaier, recently reviewed the pluses and minuses of progress in management of Fraser Island during the last year in a candid report presented to the National Parks Weekend hosted by FIDO at Elanda Point on 1st April. It was part of an annual weekend for the National Parks Association of Queensland and its affiliated organizations (which include FIDO) to celebrate National Parks Day (28th March) and to review their respective activities and progress for the year. The 2007 weekend marked the 99th year since the first Queensland National Park (Witches Falls) at Mt Tambourine was declared.

Overall 2006 was a negative year for Fraser Island despite FIDO's best endeavours.

The negatives fall under four main headings:

- (1) unsustainable levels of visitation,
- (2) the failure to adequately protect the marine resources,
- (3) unacceptable environmental impacts from the development of some excessively wide firebreaks on Fraser Island, and
- (4) recognition that climate change will have a greater impact on the natural integrity of Fraser Island than tourism, timber extraction and sandmining combined.

However, it hasn't all been negative and some positives include a better coordination with local government and others to address the weed problems on Fraser Island, a successful Fraser Island conference at University of the Sunshine Coast and a start to move forward with better implementation of the Fraser Island Fire Management Strategy.

1. Unsustainable Visitation: By previous independent assessments commissioned by the QPWS, visitation to Fraser Island remains unsustainable and, although there has been a decline in visitor numbers in recent years from a peak of 360,000, with the current management, its carrying capacity is being obviously exceeded.

Nowhere is the evidence of unsustainable visitation more obvious than the growing and shameful scars on Indian Head where the skeletal soil is being rapidly eroded away down to bare rock and yet there are no plans being put forward by the QPWS to address this. At the beginning of November last year FIDO told the Minister that remedial work urgently needed to be undertaken. Having constructed the original boardwalk at Eli Creek in the early 1980s with voluntary labour, FIDO offered to undertake a voluntary project to address this shameful degradation of the most conspicuous Fraser Island icon. The Minister was very receptive to FIDO's offer but the QPWS bureaucracy has yet to even agree what it wants done five months later.

While Fraser Island has been subjected to intensive scrutiny to try to improve and better manage its carrying capacity under the TIPA (Tourism in Protected Areas) program, this process was due to be concluded many months ago but the draft report remains under wraps and even the proposal to discuss the Draft Report has now been further deferred for at least another two months. However the recommendations do not address the idea of making the transportation more sustainable and it has many caveats about what needs to be done to many sites to improve their carrying capacity.

FIDO still continues to try to pursue a more sustainable transportation system with a light rail on Fraser Island. However, FIDO's approach to Queensland Tourism to fund a \$100,000 detailed feasibility study may have been scuttled by a QPWS representative misquoting the estimate of the capital cost as \$50M instead of the \$15M determined by the QPWS's appointed consultants GHD.

2. Poor Marine Protection: Another negative for Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region was the failure by the Beattie Government to adequately protect the natural resources of the marine environment surrounding Fraser Island. The grossly inadequate no-take zone in the Great Sandy Region Marine Park (Northern Section) of less than 4% declared during the last year is testimony to that. This is only about a quarter of the IUCN recommendations for marine protected areas and shows a complete lack of environmental principles.

(a) Fraser Island Fishing Expo: The failure to take into account the impact on the marine environment of the Annual "Boys' Own" Fishing Expo at Orchid Beach and allowing a World Heritage site to be used for a huge commercial promotion whilst externalizing many of the costs such as the maintenance of the Middle Rocks to Orchid Beach road also reflects a disregard for the marine environment.

(b) Mary River dam: The decision then to virtually stop the flow of the Mary River into Great Sandy Strait by constructing a huge dam at Traveston Crossing can be expected to have the most adverse long term impacts on this Wetland of International Significance (Ramsar) site.

(c) Aquaculture and Fisheries Management Plans: The dramatic and totally surprising appearance of a Pearl Farm in the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar site and on the doorstep of the Fraser Island World Heritage site without FIDO's knowledge is some indication that the Beattie Government pays even less than lip service to the process of community consultation. FIDO is still trying to discover the terms and conditions of this lease in this very sensitive area. Apparently no environmental impact assessment was done. The scallop ranch in the middle of Hervey Bay set a precedent for such secrecy. Likewise FIDO has found it difficult to get information on the proposed Fin-Fish Fisheries Plan although in 1996 we spent great energy making submissions only to see nothing done to respond to any submissions and to develop any sort of plan.

3. Fraser Island Fire Management Strategy: Last year Fraser Island suffered some very serious and unnecessary bulldozing to create some absurdly wide firebreaks. It was then we learnt that there is a lot of devil in the detail of fine print. The environmental impact was

entirely unacceptable except to some parts of the QPWS but the matter has been resolved with assurances that we won't see a repetition of this damage with other firebreaks.

The firebreaks issue coincided with the Fraser Island conference that FIDO convened with the Scientific Advisory Committee on maintaining the integrity of Fraser Island. Our keynote speaker was recognized as one of Australia's leading fire ecologists. One outcome from the conference is now a cooperative project involving the University of the Sunshine Coast, the QPWS and the NPAQ to monitor and map the fire history of Fraser Island to help fine tune the Fire Management Strategy.

4. Climate Change: Following the release of "An Inconvenient Truth", FIDO did an innovative assessment of the impact of Climate change on Fraser Island. This is contained in a background on the FIDO web site. FIDO's analysis of known and observed impacts of climate change show that a sea-level rise of one metre will lead to the loss of about 5-10% of Fraser Island's area. It will lead to a loss of many species because dominant trees such as Syncarpia, tallowwoods, blackbutt and scribbly gums already reach the northern limits of their range on Fraser Island. It will also see new species migrating in, including crocodiles. Changed wind patterns are already seeing sandblows dramatically shrinking with the probability that they may disappear within another 100 years. Although many other impacts are yet to be realized, it is obvious from what we already know that climate change poses by far the greatest threat yet to Fraser Island easily out-ranking the impact of the logging and sandmining industries. The impacts though affect not only Fraser Island but also the whole of Queensland's protected area estate.

Some Positives: There have been some positives. As indicated before there have been positive outcomes from the Fraser Island conference in September. There has been a better, more coordinated effort to address Fraser Island's weed problems with a series of weeding bees but continued effort will be needed.

The Queensland Government declared Fraser Island to be a "wild river" but this is only as good as the Premier's word and with respect to Fraser Island, the Premier who made some very specific and good promises about bringing Fraser Island under a single authority if he was re-elected in 2001, has a very big credibility gap.

If anyone thinks that Fraser Island was "Saved" when it achieved both National Park and World Heritage status, then think again. No great assets are ever safe from over exploitation if there isn't a watchdog providing constant vigilance to protect it. That is why FIDO is the Watchdog of Fraser Island. But there is still a lot more to be achieved to reduce the number of negatives that are eroding Fraser Island's unique values.

Much more is needed to ensure that Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region are safe from exploitation and unsustainable use.



Another Dingo Attack

Just after Easter a four-year-old girl was bitten on the thigh, buttocks and lower back by a dingo. She had been playing close to her father's vehicle on the beach near the island township of Eurong. She had to be treated by paramedics as a hunt was launched for the dingo that attacked her. The dingo which attacked her was subsequently hunted and put down.

Although it is six years since a dingo killed Clinton Gage and since then the number of incidents has dramatically declined, this attack revived many familiar but unacceptable or untrue ideas relating to dingoes:

- * people and dingoes could no longer co-exist on the island.
- * dingoes on Fraser Island are starving and the government should set up feeding stations for them;
- * all Fraser Island dingoes need to be put in a special enclosure like a zoo and tourists could go to see them like some side-show exhibit if they were so inclined.

However some aspects of the incident need to be noted:

Habituation: Most of the attacks now occur near Eurong or other places where dingoes are known to be habituated. Although there are fewer than 100 permanent residents on Fraser Island, it is common knowledge that some residents feed the dingoes and do it so surreptitiously that without continuous 24 hour surveillance they escape detection and fines. It is the dingoes that are most habituated that are responsible for the attacks. The people who continue to feed these dingoes will have blood on their hands if there is another serious attack.

The Time of the Year: Easter (Autumn-April) is not a good time for dingo attacks and dry years are even worse. Dingo researcher Nick Baker has pointed out that Autumn is the dingoes' breeding season when dingoes are "ramped up" by the need to breed.

"They have hormones running through them all the time, they are marking their territory, trying to defend it and males are trying to hang onto their females and trying to keep other males out of the area," Mr Baker said. *"The females are also coming into breeding season and they are very excitable as well, so it's not a mix you would want to be throwing kids into."*

Dry Years: Nick Baker's research has also shown a correlation between the frequency of dingo incidents and the droughts. Dingoes are more aggressive in their search for food in drier years when bush food becomes scarcer. This makes them bolder in their search for food and they are potentially more dangerous. It is another reason to hope that we have more wetter years and that Fraser Island receives heavy rains soon.

The Eurong Incident brought those three factors together. The weather and the seasons are out of human hands but the matter of habituation is something which needs to be addressed more determinedly. Anyone who has evidence which can convict those residents who are feeding dingoes should help stamp out this practice which may well cause a human fatality rather than just the extermination of the dingoes that become habituated.

Impacts of Mary River Dam at Traveston

FIDO recently made a comprehensive submission to the Senate Committee for Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport which is conducting an inquiry into the Impacts of Mary River Dam at Traveston. It focused particularly on the downstream impacts in the area that is the primary focus of FIDO. MOONBI here publishes key parts of FIDO's submission to the inquiry.

There are significant internationally important ecosystems downstream that will be adversely impacted by the Traveston Dam, including the Great Sandy World Heritage Area and the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar Site.

FIDO believes that despite the political promises made by the Queensland Government, the construction of the Traveston Dam will effectively stop most, if not all, of the flow of the Mary River into Great Sandy Strait. Any environmental flow going past the dam will be captured by weirs downstream for agriculture and Gympie's water supply. Little if any flow will get past the Yengarie tidal barrage. Even without the Traveston Dam, the flow past the tidal barrage is already minimal, and for much of the past year there has been negligible or no flow past this point. The only other significant flow into the Mary River below the barrage could come from Tinana Creek, but that is already heavily committed to the Maryborough urban water supply. Thus this dam is likely to stop the environmental flow of the Mary River into Great Sandy Strait.

Whilst this Submission focuses on the downstream impacts, we are also concerned about the inundated area, where the future of the Mary River Cod, the Mary Turtle and the Lungfish will be threatened. As well as causing social dislocation to hundreds of people, the Traveston Dam will also flood a number of sites of significance to Traditional Owners, an issue that has not been adequately assessed.

Downstream Impacts

The Great Sandy Strait is a rich ecosystem that is recognized by having the entire eastern length included in the Fraser Island World Heritage Area and the entire strait as a Ramsar Wetland of International significance. The Great Sandy World Heritage Area extends 500 metres from Fraser Island's high water mark. At the most critical part of the Strait, it extends 500 metres from Dream and Stewart Islands, to cover the full length of the eastern side of the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar site.

Great Sandy Strait follows the ancestral bed of the Mary River south from its existing mouth. It developed as an estuary during the last 10,000 years since the end of the last ice age when the sea level rose approximately 120 metres. The lessening gradient resulted in a slower velocity of flow through Great Sandy Strait. As a result the silt washed down from the Mary River catchment created this extremely rich and productive estuary. Traveston Dam, along with the other already existing impoundments on the Mary River, will now trap all nutrient rich sediment that once flowed into Great Sandy Strait.

This rich marine ecosystem depends on a steady flow of nutrients and silt as well as water. It also depends on fresh water flushing it. The dramatic reduction (almost total blockage) of environmental flow into this most significant estuary will heavily impact on these very sensitive aspects of marine ecology. Any significant reduction of the flow from the Mary River will necessarily adversely impact on the salinity and pH of Great Sandy Strait.

The Traveston Dam will adversely impact the Great Sandy Strait and the Great Sandy World Heritage Area in several ways as a result of the Mary River rarely if ever releasing any flow into Great Sandy Strait.

- * The flow of nutrients from the catchment will be reduced, resulting in loss of vegetation and marine life. There will be fewer fish for recreational and commercial fishers, as well as marine life and migratory birds. This will adversely impact both the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar Site and the Great Sandy World Heritage Area.
- * As well as creating a rich ecosystem sustaining marine and bird life, the silt creating the Great Sandy Straits was also central to allowing the local indigenous communities to travel from the mainland to Fraser Island and back again. The Aboriginal history of the region depended on the capacity of communities to hunt on the mainland or the island depending on the seasons. Interfering with that process will adversely impact the traditional history of the region, in particular the history of the Great Sandy World Heritage Area.
- * For millennia floods have flushed channels through the Great Sandy Strait allowing the passage of marine life as well as the passage of humans in boats. Without flooding, the mouth of the Mary could well become unnavigable for all but the smallest craft. Whilst dredging may allow boats to subsequently negotiate the sandbars and mudbanks, marine life will largely be blocked from heading upstream. This will adversely impact the Great Sandy Strait ecosystem, the Fraser Island World Heritage Area, as well as the lower Mary.
- * The maintenance of the fresh water flowing into Great Sandy Strait is vital to supporting the levels of salinity and pH on which Great Sandy Strait's rich ecosystem is based. The loss of environmental flow resulting from the Traveston Dam will reduce the productivity in ways that can't yet begin to be quantified.

Cost Benefit Analysis

There has been no Cost Benefit Analysis released to show that the Traveston Dam is the best solution to the Water Needs of the Region. Indeed, it appears that the full cost of the Traveston Dam has yet to be determined, let alone compared with the alternatives. This is a serious concern, and something that needs to be facilitated at the earliest opportunity.

Elsewhere MOONBI 115 includes a backgrounder showing just how the environmental flow from rivers enriches the estuarine and wider marine environment.



From BCC to ACC (Before Climate Change & After Climate Change)

For the past 36 years FIDO has been appreciating and protecting the amazing values of Fraser Island which have warranted its World Heritage recognition, only to now discover that the impact of global warming and the consequent climate change is going to result in an even more devastating impact than the tourism, timber, and mining industries combined. Following an initial assessment of the impacts of climate change on Fraser Island last December, FIDO is refining and better defining how the impacts of climate change will affect Fraser Island. Climate change is already impacting on Fraser Island in demonstrable ways.

Vegetation will be most heavily impacted: Just heating up of the climate by one or two degrees will result in many species which already have reached the northern limit of their range slowly disappearing. These will include the scribbly gums, (*Eucalyptus racemosa*) blackbutts (*E. pilularis*) and tallowwoods (*E. microcorrays*) and probably the Peebangs (*Syncarpia hillii*). These are four very dominant trees in the forest. Of the larger trees, only paperbarks (*Melaleuca quinquinerva*) and brush-box (*Lophostemon confertus*) are present in such conspicuous numbers on Fraser Island.

They won't immediately die out (We hope). They will though gradually fade out with little or no recruitment to replace the natural attrition. However there are no identified species which may fill the niche when they drop out of the ecosystem. Fauna is more mobile and able to migrate into new suitable habitats than flora. Some marine species including crocodiles and Irukandji are already starting to take advantage of the Great Sandy Region's warmer waters. However, the opportunity for Fraser Island to recruit new flora species to fill the niches previously dominated by Syncarpias, blackbutt, tallowwoods and scribbly gums is much more limited because most of the adjacent land is already significantly depleted of natural species and being an island makes migration more difficult.

Impact on Fauna: The outcome of this dismal scenario is that the habitat on Fraser Island is likely to be profoundly changed as a result of climate change. The composition and structure of the forests will be most profoundly altered and with it the habitat for the fauna. Fraser's fauna will be impacted enormously. Some bird species, already at the northernmost limit of their range such as the ground parrot and musk ducks, are likely to disappear. Fish such as bass and tailor which are also at the northern limit of their range are likely to be at risk. On the other hand some species will move into the welcoming warmer regime.

Immigrant Fauna: These include crocodiles which are already showing evidence of moving south. Within a few years swimmers even on the Sunshine Coast may have to heed crocodile warnings. Irukandji are also already taking advantage of the Great Sandy Region's warming waters.

However climate change has other consequences particularly in impacting on the strength and direction of winds and on a sandy shoreline, this has a profound impact. Already an increasing prevalence of winds from the north has seen a greater frequency of days with "weed" (marine algae) in the inshore areas and creeks like Eli Creek along the island's eastern shores start flowing south instead of north across the beach. It is likely that this wind shift is responsible for the rapid shrinking of the famous sandblows.

Sea Level Impacts: About 8% of the land area of Fraser Island is the result of the sea-level falling by just one metre just over 5000 years ago. Climate change is likely to result in a sea-level rise greater than one metre which will result in a loss of all of this land surface. This will be mainly along the shores of Great Sandy Strait, Moon Point, Wathumba Creek and the North Spit area.

Windier: Other aspects of climate change will result in more destructive cyclones which if they hit Fraser Island will have a far greater impact because the coast is much more open to erosion.

Hotter: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report on the expected impacts of climate change has predicted that temperatures in inland Australia will increase by up to 1.3°C by 2020, 3.4°C by 2050 and 6.1°C by 2080. Heatwaves and bushfires will increase in intensity and droughts are likely to become frequent. Heat related deaths will rise from 1,115 a year to as many as 6,300 per year by 2050.

Drier: There is already the greater probability of a drier climate and greater fire risks. These may already be here but it may get worse. **If nothing is done to slow down or reverse the climate changes now in progress due to greenhouse gas emissions, future generations will inherit a Fraser Island diminished in area and biodiversity.**



Fraser's Irukandji Jellyfish

In March Cairns JCU stinger expert, Jamie Seymour, found five Irukandji jellyfish off Moon Point while working as a consultant on the Warner Bros movie, "Fool's Gold". It caused Hollywood stars Matthew McConaughey and Kate Hudson to film the sequence elsewhere. The migration of these minute but deadly marine creatures 400 kms south of their southernmost previous records has been interpreted as indicating a warmer sea as a result of climate change. In late April a man was stung by an Irukandji on Shelly Beach at Hervey Bay's Esplanade. He suffered vomiting, shivering, dizziness, sore joints, a chronic headache and lost 8kg in eight days. It is possible that Irukandji may have been in Hervey Bay for a while. A less serious case was reported by a diver last year while spear-fishing off Fraser Island.

Cliff Thompson Honoured

The late Cliff Thompson was a soil scientist whose seminal work in Cooloola lead to a better understanding of the dune systems of both Fraser Island and Cooloola, has been honoured by a new scholarship program to support scientific research in the Fraser Island World Heritage Area (FIWHA)

Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr has announced that the Cliff Thompson Memorial Scholarship of \$10,000 each year will be awarded to a post-graduate project to support research related to the FIWHA. The scholarship aims to help encourage and support further scientific research that adds value and contributes to improved management of Fraser Island. She said by offering the scholarship, the EPA and the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee hoped to see more research being undertaken to unlock the secrets of this remarkable and still largely unknown island.

Cliff worked extensively around Australia and his research on the Cooloola dunes is recognized world-wide. He freely passed on his information and participated in FIDO's largest safari when 120 people participated in a Discovering Cooloola weekend in the 1980s. Cliff's work was influential in Fraser Island's World Heritage recognition in 1992. Cliff was most disappointed that Cooloola's World Heritage status hasn't yet been recognized although in his opinion it has at least as good credentials for inscription.

Cliff was a member of the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee for 15 years and it was that committee which first proposed that a scholarship in his

name be established. Chair of the SAC, Dr. Annie Ross said that students researching any aspect of the world heritage area can apply for the scholarship. *"This scholarship is designed to support any advanced level research students, that is masters or PhD students, and provide them with some additional funds to assist with their fieldwork or other research-related activities,"* Dr Ross said.

Opposition Criticizes Under-spending

The Queensland Opposition's interest in Fraser Island has been raised and recently Opposition environment spokeswoman Rosemary Menkens accused the Beattie Government of grossly under-spending the budget for works on Fraser Island.

She said that Government figures show that only \$93,000 has been spent out of a \$2.25 million budget for the Great Sandy Marine Park and that a number of projects promised haven't been finished. She particularly cited the on-going white elephant, the new Dundubara amenities block which has stood vacant and unused for several years because the QPWS hasn't yet installed a long promised waste treatment plant.

"[Of a total of] \$660,000 for a waste treatment system at the Dundubara Base, just \$19,000 has been spent and of \$450,000 for an office and first aid room at the base, only \$21,000 so far has been spent. This has been set aside in the budget to spend this year and this inept Government simply has not spent it," she said.

Portuguese on Fraser Island in 1522?

A recently published book cites Fraser Island as providing some evidence that the Portuguese explored Australia's east coast 250 years before Captain Cook sailed onto the scene.

FIDO has long nurtured a view that the Portuguese visited Fraser Island in the 16th Century. This follows the discovery of a lead sinker near the lead navigation lights at Hook Point in the 1970s. FIDO has long been aware of maps drawn long before Cook which showed Fraser Island separated from the mainland. FIDO's theory has received strong support from Peter Trickett's book, *"Beyond Capricorn"*. Trickett suggests that a Portuguese fleet visited Fraser Island (and elsewhere in Australia and New Zealand) *"250 years before Cook"*.

Trickett, a retired Canberra-based science journalist, argues that the Portuguese kept their discoveries secret because of their rivalry with the Spanish. He believes Cristavao de Mendonca was given secret instructions by King Manuel I to find a fabled land of gold south of Java, alluded to by Marco Polo in the 13th century. De Mendonca's fleet of four ships left the Portuguese base of Malacca in 1522, sailing down the east coast of Australia, and along the southern coast as far as the Great Australian Bight before returning to their home port by way of the New Zealand.

Trickett's thesis grew out of his discovery of a chart drawn up by French cartographers in 1547, based on purloined Portuguese maps. After studying the chart, Trickett theorised that the French map-makers had wrongly spliced together two of the Portuguese charts they were copying

from. One map closely resembles the coastline of Queensland, aside from a point where it suddenly veers away at a right angle for a distance of about 1500km. With the help of a computer expert, he divided the map in two and rotated the lower half by 90 degrees. The chart fitted almost exactly the east coast of Australia and its south coast as far as Kangaroo Island.

Trickett supports his theory by citing the discovery of various Portugese artefacts along Australia's eastern coastline including the lead fishing sinker on Fraser Island, off Queensland in the 1970s. Analysis showed the lead was mined in Portugal or the south of France sometime around 1500.

Historians hypothesize that because of the Portugese rivalry with Spain and the Treaty of Tordesillas, the Portuguese kept Mendonca's charts secret. Trickett says Mendonca's secret voyage ranks with that of Columbus or Magellan and he was rewarded by being made commander of the lucrative fortress at Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, where he eventually died.

Had Portuguese military might not been compromised by a disastrous invasion of Morocco in the 1560s, and the original charts not been lost in a disastrous earthquake followed by a tsunami and fire, resulting in the near-total destruction of Lisbon in 1755, Australian history may not have had such a British basis.

Great Sandy Aquaculture Planning

While one part of the Queensland Government is pushing to see the Great Sandy Marine Park opened up for aquaculture and another is busy drafting a Management Plan to better regulate the aquaculture industry before it is totally out of control in Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Strait, some in the industry see it as ripe for an open slather and aim to get in first.

A Beche-de-mer Grow Out Facility

FIDO learnt about Bluefin Seafoods Pty Ltd's application for a lease of "approx area 15.4 square mile" to grow sea cucumbers (beche-de-mer) in an EPBC Notice circulated on 27th March. Comments were sought by 3rd April. FIDO deferred submitting any comments until we had attended a meeting convened by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries on 4th April, just prior to Easter, to help develop a Draft Aquaculture Management Plan for the Great Sandy Marine Park.

The inferior EPBC application referred only to an immediate and urgent demand for approval. The area sought was described at one part as "approx 11 nautical miles from the nearest point of land" and elsewhere "approx 7 nautical miles from the nearest land point (Fraser Island)". It made it difficult to respond when the map said to be attached to the application wasn't attached and no other description was given other than that the area of interest was in the City of Hervey Bay and in a Marine Park (presumably Great Sandy). That suggests that the area sought is located in Queensland State waters but despite a reference in 3.3 to "leasehold supervised by Qld Fisheries", the head of the Aquaculture Branch of QDPIF said that he had no knowledge of this application and presumed that it might have been outside State waters.

The needs of the environment and the special significance of the Great Sandy Region are not adequately reflected in the application which appears to be poorly prepared to meet the requirements for EPBC approval. .

FIDO requested further details of the area and the operation involved from the EPBC Branch but this was ignored. On 16th April, the Commonwealth decided that the application should not be a "Controlled Action"

Draft Aquaculture Management Plan

Although FIDO has been conspicuously omitted from any consultation over the DPIF's development of a Finfish Management Plan, we have had some input into a Draft Aquaculture Management Plan being prepared for the Great Sandy Marine Park. Unfortunately, from what we have seen in the preparation of this plan, the intention seems to be focused on separating various aquaculture ventures in the interests of minimizing conflict between the anticipated aquaculturalists. If this is reflected in the Draft Plan, this will have the effect of fragmentation of the Marine Park and make any possibility of significantly improving the zoning plan for the Great Sandy Marine Park when its miserable, less than 4% of no-take zone is reviewed a virtual impossibility because of the scattering of proposed potential aquaculture sites throughout the area.

Fragmentation must be resisted: While FIDO doesn't object to aquaculture in principle, we can't see why it has to be so dispersed. FIDO believes that the highest priority for the Great Sandy Marine Park is to establish a reasonable no-take zone in line with what has been recommended by the IUCN and what has been implemented on the Great Barrier Reef. This would see a minimum of 15% set aside as a no take zone. However it will be very difficult to have aquaculture ranches and farms in the midst of no-take zones and the planning now should be anticipating improving the status of the miserable Great Sandy Marine Park when it is reviewed in a few year's time.

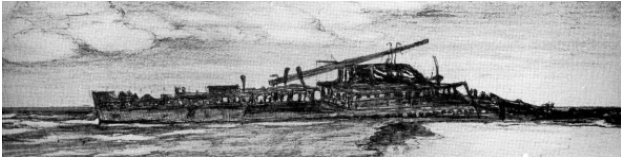
If there is to be the increase in aquaculture in Great Sandy that the Queensland Government is seeking, it should be consolidated into more compact zones avoiding the more sensitive sites that warrant no-take zone status.

More Visitors than Previously Thought

While working on the visitor numbers at various Fraser Island sites, the working group questioned the rate of the decline in visitor numbers on which the table published in MOONBI 114 was based. They caused a review of the QPWS statistics and found that there had been some serious miscalculations by failing to include a number of FIT (Free and Independent Travellers). Thus the table published in MOONBI 114 and the interpretation is not as accurate as FIDO would have wished to present. MOONBI apologizes for carrying the table based on the inaccurate statistics we were given and will publish more accurate figures as soon as possible .



Degradation at Indian Head which FIDO is anxious to help the QPWS urgently address along with other management issues here



Woralie Wild Fire and Firebreak

An electrical storm in mid-November resulted in a lightning strike at Moon Point. This started the Woralie wildfire which continued to burn up to 8th January, and covered approximately 20,000ha of Fraser Island. This fire wasn't reported to members of the Community Advisory Committee until the delivery of "Sandpaper" some three months after the fire went out.

Sandpaper said, "Dry and windy conditions fed the wildfire, which penetrated from Fraser's west coast through heathland, open woodland and wet sclerophyll forest, before reaching the eastern beach. Staff from throughout the district assisted with on ground fire suppression, and management of the incident. Different suppression tactics were used to control the fire, with back-burning, aerial water bombing, blacking out and mopping up, all contributing to its successful control.

Sandpaper went on to say that the Woralie fire control line played a significant part in enabling this fire to be controlled. The fire control line was integral in containing the fire, and preventing its spread to the Northern section of the island.

If this was an answer to FIDO's criticism of the QPWS firebreak widening last year, it has had the reverse effect. **The success of the Woralie firebreak (which MOONBI 113 (p9) reported to be acceptable) only goes to prove that it was unnecessary to have such a wide over-the-top widening as the Dillingham Road.**



Indian Head — in urgent need of better management

Consultation Reduced to a Sham

This MOONBI as most other MOONBIs cites examples of the failure of the QPWS to consult. While there may be better communication elsewhere in government, the lack of flow of information with anything to do with Fraser Island is appalling. Just how much of a charade it is was demonstrated by the decision to defer for unexplained "unavoidable" reasons a meeting of the CAC for which the dates were set last April. It wasn't put off for a week or two, but for two whole months. The QPWS also refuses to release its monthly Fraser Island reports when they are completed and only provides them as a bundle at CAC meeting times. This withholding of information is not helping Fraser Island to be better managed.

FRASER ISLAND DEFENDERS ORGANISATION LIMITED NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thirtieth Annual General Meeting of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited will be held at Downfall Creek Bushland Centre, 815 Rode Road, McDowall, 6.30 p.m., **Wednesday, 8th August, 2007.**

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.

Michelle Sinclair

BY THE ORDER OF THE BOARD
Michelle Sinclair
Honorary Secretary
DATED this 1st day of April, 2007

PROXY FORM

30th 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 Thirtieth Annual General Meeting, to be held at Downfall Creek Bushland Centre 815 Rode Road, McDowall, 6.30 p.m., **Wednesday, 8th August, 2007** and at any adjournment thereof.

Signedthisday of, 2008



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 8th August, 2007.

Nomination Form for FIDO Office Bearers

To be returned to Secretary FIDO, PO Box 909 TOOWONG QLD 4066 by Tuesday, 7th August, 2007

We,and
being financial members of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization hereby nominate
for the position of for the 2007-8 term
Signed..... Nominator

The Raging Road Debate

There is now a fierce and intense lobbying by some 4WD drivers to stop being forced to use a rough road to travel from Hook Point. They want to be able to use the road when the tide is too high to travel on the beach but as rugged as their 4WDs may be, they don't want to travel on any rough tracks on Fraser Island if they can avoid it.

18 kilometres of beach north from the Hook Point Ferry are proposed to be closed to all vehicular traffic as soon as parking, picnic and camping nodes are completed. This is expected to be completed within the next two months or sooner. It will allow people and wildlife to enjoy the only vehicle free beaches on Fraser Island's eastern beach except for 2 kilometres between Waddy Point and Middle Rocks

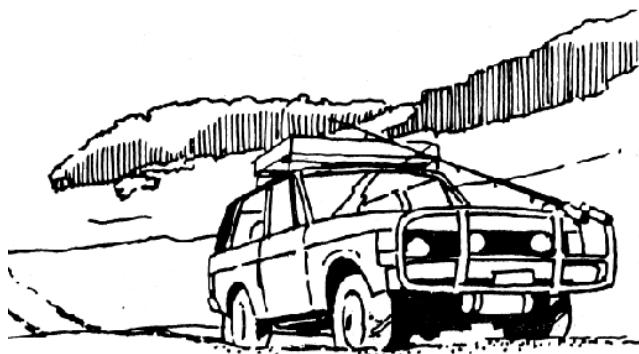
In 2000 a "Sunshine Coast Daily" poll on, "*Should four wheel drives be banned from Fraser Island?*" resulted in a surprising 47% wanting 4WDs banned from the island. This is not the issue in 2007. Multiple reasons were given and many favoured restrictions rather than an outright ban. The debate centres on whether 4WDs should be banned from 18 kms of beach.

Opponents of 18 kms of Beach Closure

Some 4WDers: The Member for Gympie tabled a petition in Parliament in April to stop the closure of this 18 kms of Fraser Island beach near Hook Point. The paper petition attracted 3033 signatures, while the e-petition attracted 1549 signatures between 5 March and 13 April 2007. Most of the support for leaving the beach open is based on safety grounds although there is enormous evidence to the contrary indicating that the road is safer than that section of beach. The Gympie MP says that tourists will be "*put at risk*" if they are forced off the beach to what he claims is a "*poorly maintained road.*" He thinks it should be brought "up to standard". He claims that a "*logging track*" is not equipped to handle the "*hundreds of cars a week*" dropped off by the barge at Hook Point. He considers this a "*high volume of traffic*" and that beach traffic shouldn't be diverted to the road.

The Internet: One web site says there are many people who support or want to allow open slather for vehicles on the beaches.

Local authorities absolve themselves by saying that Australians have always driven on the beach. Some argue that only kill-joys are against it. Tourism officials argue that a ban would be bad for business and instead tinker with permit schemes, curfews and vehicle-free areas. With happy motorists in the majority, local authorities are loathe to declare beaches vehicle-free.



Supporters of 18 kms Beach Closure

The Minister: *We are doing this to make that section of beach available to families, so that they can appreciate that absolutely pristine part of the world without four-wheel-drives racing down the beaches,* Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr said. Most Fraser Island's Ocean Beach still remains open for four-wheel-driving.

FIDO: Members of the FIDO Management Committee inspected Fraser Island in April and found that the beach around the Hook Point was much more dangerous than the corrugated and dusty road alternative. FIDO found people being bogged or caught in water as they tried to get around fallen trees on the beach. Elsewhere vehicles were lurching and swaying especially when they encountered soft sand. There have been many serious vehicular accidents on the beach. FIDO's objective assessment is that the road is much safer especially if the speed limit is observed.

FIDO thinks that it is ironical that people want 4WDs so that they can go to Fraser Island to "rough it" but balk at a bit of dust and corrugation on an otherwise hard surface where they can't get stuck in sand.

FIDO welcomes the government's decision to implement a long standing plan to upgrade the inland mining road and close the beach to vehicles on Fraser Island between Dilli Village and Hook Point. The move comes 13 years after the release of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan in 1994 which outlined the need to, '*balance access needs with environmental and recreational considerations*' by closing this small stretch of beach. Since that time, FIDO has lobbied the government to honour this and other management strategies set out in the management plan.

FIDO isn't alone. There is amazement around the world that Australians allow so much beach driving. FIDO has noted an article on the internet about people being amazed and appalled at some 4WD drivers' demands to have such free access to any beach. We quote from one article:

"British backpacker Scott Osbourne was sleeping under the stars on Fraser Island when a four-wheel-drive ran over him. He said from his Brisbane hospital bed. 'You don't get any signs on Fraser Island saying 'This is a Road' - it's basically a big beach you can drive up and down'. Like many foreign tourists, Osbourne is amazed that vehicles are allowed the run of Australia's beaches. Take a walk in the sunset and you risk the ire of motorists. Sleep under the stars and you may never wake up."

The closure will provide benefits for visitors and shore bird populations in that there will now be a beach free from vehicular traffic. Fraser Island still has many kilometres of beach that can be used by 4WDs and we are confident that the majority of visitors appreciate the need for this decision and will quickly become accustomed to using the improved inland road. It's safer, available at all tides and takes no longer than the old beach route.