



MOONBI 121

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 120

State Sponsored Degradation: In view of FIDO's observations of truckloads of sediment being washed off the road (taking visitors to the day use area) into Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) over the last decade, this issue has been a major focus of FIDO. It has slipped so far off the focus of the QPWS that they have done nothing for more than two years to stop the flow of water and sediments into the lake at the point where the road passes within 20 metres of it. When the QPWS insisted on considering only three options for the redevelopment of Lake McKenzie — all of which placed all of the surface disturbance from parking inside the lake catchment - FIDO appealed first to the Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change to relocate the parking just over the ridgeline and outside the lake catchment. That appeal failed. FIDO then sought to have the \$2.8M redevelopment made a controlled action under the EPBC Act. That initiative also failed. So now we are confronted with *state sponsored degradation* of the most iconic and popular site of this World Heritage island. The public has a right to feel it has been let down. See p.3

Another 4WD Beach Fatality: In November another fatal 4WD crash occurred on Fraser Island's eastern beach. Again it involved an international tourist. The accident (see story p 2) has resulted in more vocal calls to ensure driver competency. This has been a position advocated by FIDO for almost two decades but it has been frustrated by inter-governmental agreements on recognition of drivers licences from other countries and by the commercial interests whose business is based on hiring out vehicles to people incompetent to drive heavy 4WDs and/or people inexperienced with understanding conditions on Fraser Island. There are many proposals being advanced. Hire companies, keen to preserve their businesses, are proposing tag-along tours. FIDO is proposing that there is a need to change the experiences for international visitors to Fraser Island from the adventure of being crammed into a troopie to actually experiencing and appreciating Fraser Island for the values that warranted its inclusion on the World Heritage List. See story p 2.

Backgrounders: One of FIDO's objectives is to make visitation to Fraser Island safer and more sustainable. This necessarily involves changes to the **patterns of recreation**. To help people understand just what influences the patterns of recreation we include a Backgrounder with this issue. The are also two smaller backgrounders — one on Fraser Island's potentially lethal **funnel-web spiders** and the other on the **Moha Moha**, a fantastic reptilian like monster reported from the Sandy Cape area that was like an invention of a science fiction writer but to the observers it was real.

Privatization of our National Parks: As MOONBI 120 was going to press there was a furore as a result of Premier Bligh's announcement the her government would be facilitating private ecotourism developments within and adjacent to national parks. Fraser Island was mentioned but the developments were to be located on unallocated State Land within the village of Eurong on unallocated state land to provide tented accommodation aimed mainly at the backpacker market. However three of the developments are within National Parks. This drew a furious response from the voluntary conservation movement. FIDO has long supported the concept of a light rail on Fraser Island to reduce the environmental impact of visiting the island even if this was undertaken as a commercial enterprise. It is ironical that the State is facilitating accommodation developments yet has steadfastly refused to even consider the feasibility of a light rail project on Fraser Island. As a result FIDO has reported on this story p10 and produced our policy on this topic

Malaysian park management puts Queensland's to shame: Fraser Island attracts 350,000 visitors annually and contributes more than \$277M to the Queensland economy. Yet the State contributes relatively little to protecting this outstanding national asset. There are many sites showing the degradation of Fraser Island and the lack of an adequate action to address them. The management of Fraser Island compares very poorly with the management of Malaysia's **Mulu World Heritage area** as revealed on page 8

Other issues: Two big issues to emerge since Christmas are (1) the **proposal to renominate Fraser Island** for World Heritage listing and to enlarge the area to include Cooloola (See p.4) and (2) the proposal to create a **large marine reserve** offshore from Fraser Island where fishing may be excluded. (See p.5) We also report more fully on progress to making Fraser Island Australia's most popular walking destination. (See p.6)

FIDO is an entirely voluntary organization. FIDO continues to rely almost entirely on the financial support of its members and volunteers to carry out the vigorous program described in this issue.

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The Saga of the Troopies

In April 2009, a 4WD Troopie rolled over several times on the Ocean Beach north of Dundubara killing two young foreign backpackers. Queensland Transport finally recognized how dangerous 4WD troopies were in the hands of inexperienced drivers on Fraser Island especially ones unfamiliar with the environment. Transport Queensland immediately began a review of Troopie safety paying special attention to the demands of the hire vehicle industry serving Fraser Island.

A survey by Transport Queensland showed that even before this there was a problem. Of these, 45 (or 42.5%) of the 106 casualties resulting from crashes on Fraser Island were serious casualties. Fraser Island saw an average of 2.36 casualties per crash, compared with 1.33 casualties per crash Queensland wide. Over 40% of Fraser Island casualties were in hire vehicles with 9 to 12 occupants (Troopies).

The fatalities since caused Transport Minister, Rachel Nolan, to regulate to improve the safety of troopies going to Fraser Island. From 1st April all will be limited to a maximum of eight occupants in forward or rear facing (not side-facing) seats with no luggage storage on the roof. This addresses the stability of vehicles but fails to address driver competence.

The Fraser Island 4WD hire industry

Tag-Along Tours Spin-Off: The Fraser Coast 4WD Operators Association's 12 member companies hire out more than 200 4WDs for use on Fraser Island. They have been stridently chewing the ear of the Queensland Government to try to have the Queensland Government moderate its demands so that they can pack the maximum number of backpackers in each vehicle.

The 4WD Hire lobby's response to the first accident was to demand tag-along tours with one competent driver experienced on Fraser Island leading three other self-drive vehicles. The QPWS quickly acquiesced to this industry demand without engaging in any public consultation. This completely changes the moratorium that the QPWS had on not issuing any new Commercial Tour licences on Fraser Island.

Although on 30 October FIDO sought details of the proposed Tag-along tours so that we could consider the implications, we were assured that it wasn't on the agenda! Six months later it is a *faite accompli* with no public consultation.

The 4WD Hire lobby also pleaded for more time to be able to modify the vehicles they had and the implementation of the new regulations was deferred a few months.

Transport Queensland, however, started surprise inspections at Inskip Point of hire 4WDs heading for Fraser Island in early December to find that of the 22 vehicles from eight hire companies inspected 13 had defects. In the second day of the operations at Mary River Heads, 17 vehicles were prohibited from continuing their journey until they were made compliant. Nine exceeded the gross vehicle mass (GVM). Only one overloaded 4WD was able to re-adjust its load: the others had to make alternative arrangements. Nine had defects including faulty brakes, tyres and seat belts

Lost in Translation

On 13th December, Japanese backpacker, 25 year old Kenji Sakai was killed and seven other Japanese backpackers were injured when their hired Toyota Landcruiser flipped three times on the beach north of Dundubara. He was thrown from the vehicle and had died from multiple head injuries. The vehicle turned out not to be a Troopie but a Land Cruiser wagon which had forward facing seats. However it had eight people aboard the vehicle that had only seven seats.

The Coroner was told by the driver, 29 y.o. Takashi Nukutou that he was shown a driver training video when he collected the vehicle in Hervey Bay the day before the fatal accident, but he did not understand the video "100 per cent" because it was in English. He did not understand the contract he had signed at Aussie Trax, which included a "survival code" on 4WD safety. Though he believed an eight-seater had been booked for their use, when he counted seven seats in the vehicle, he told the court he "*thought that was an eight-seater car in Australia.*" However he said he did not know how many seatbelts the vehicle was fitted with.

Mr Nukutou told the court through a translator that on the morning of the crash, he had less than one glass of leftover wine he didn't want to waste. He told the court that he didn't remember his speed immediately before the crash, having no recollection of anything between passing a shipwreck, and waking up in a Brisbane hospital. Before the accident he had manoeuvred away from waves, he said, because he didn't want to get the vehicle wet, but did not remember if he had made such a manoeuvre at the time of the roll over.

On the ferry to the island, he said he saw others drivers adjusting the pressure of tyres on their vehicles and so he did the same, though no one from hiring company had said if they needed to adjust their tyres' pressure. "*We tried the other tyres [of other cars] with our feet and then we tried on our car and they felt the same,*" he said.

New Rules for Hire 4WDs

Transport Queensland has introduced new laws applying to hire 4WDs that should help to make it safer for tourists who visit the island.

From 1 April 2010, all hire 4WD vehicles can carry no more than eight occupants and safely secured luggage inside the vehicle (not on the roof). Heavy loads on the roof can affect vehicle stability and increase the chance of rolling the vehicle, particularly when driving on sand.

From 31 December 2010, all hire 4WDs used on Fraser Island must have no side-facing seats, have a maximum of eight seats, and be fitted with seatbelts which meet Australian Design Rules. This means that 4WD hire operators will need to modify or replace troop carriers which do not comply with these laws. Drivers breaking these laws risk a A\$300 fine. These laws apply to hire vehicles only; private vehicles are exempt.

In addition to these laws, **lower speed limits** now apply (80 km/h on beaches and 30 km/h in townships and on inland tracks) and police enforcement of new speed limits and vehicle inspections by the Transport Inspectors have been increased.

Beach driving is dangerous and requires a high level of concentration.

The State Sponsored Degradation of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora)

For years FIDO has been alarmed at the rate of sediments moving into Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora).. FIDO's alarm has been elevated when an inspection in March revealed not only had the QPWS done nothing in more than two years to stop the flow of sediments from the road going directly into the lake, but with indifference they had failed to notice that the swale behind the lunette has now filled with sediment at the two access points and that sediments are now being washed onto the beach near the access points. FIDO raised our concerns by calling on the Commonwealth Government to make the redevelopment of Lake McKenzie day-use area for which they have contributed \$1.8M as a controlled action under the EPBC Act. The EPBC process like the QPWS has failed to appreciate the significance of the flow of sediments and their impact on Lake McKenzie's World Heritage values.

Alarms Ignored

Since the first FIDO safari almost 40 years ago, FIDO has been monitoring Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) and been attempting to protect its unique values now recognized by its World Heritage status. For more than a decade, FIDO has been sounding the alarm about the sediments flowing into the lake. Originally it was only the sediment flowing from the road that passes within 20 metres of the lake's eastern shores. However more recently we have raised our very serious concern about the sediment flowing into the swale behind the lake lunette. The volume of sediment is proportional to the amount of surface disturbance of the sand and the amount of surface disturbance of sand is proportional to the vehicle movements in the lake catchment area.

The lunette (or foredune) behind the lake's famous beach has until recently acted as a weir stopping the sediment flowing from the disturbed areas reaching the lake. However FIDO has noted and regularly commented on the rate at which the swale behind the lunette was filling. In August last year the accumulation of sediment in the swale was still at least 15 cms below the height of the lunette at the access points. The heavy rains over summer though have mobilized more sediment than expected and in March it was noted that the swale is now full to overflowing and, at least at one point, sediments have been washed over the lunette onto the beach.

Despite all of this clear evidence, the QPWS has insisted on redeveloping Lake McKenzie in a way that not only ignores the seriousness of the sediment but has relocated the car park from outside the lake catchment area to inside. Not only will there now be increased traffic movement and disturbance in the lake catchment area but the Commonwealth Government is helping to fund and be complicit with this scheme that will degrade the World Heritage values of this iconic lake.

FIDO and others are very upset that Ministers have been misled by their bureaucracies into believing that the Fraser Island World Heritage Community Advisory Committee had voted against relocating all traffic movement and parking outside the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) catchment when this was never an option the group was asked to consider.

Relocating the FITs: Until now almost all traffic movement and parking of FIT (free and independent travelers) vehicles has occurred outside the lake basin. **The redevelopment will increase the capacity for FIT parking from 40 to 70** and as from July, locate all parking within the lake catchment making the current situation much worse.

Rerouted roads: The road exclusively used by commercial tour operators to access the lake was entirely within the lake catchment. While closing this route is long overdue and most welcome, there are many unanswered questions about where the focus of surface disturbance from the buses and their passengers is now to occur. It also begs the question of when the road passing within 20 metres of the lake will be relocated.

FIDO isn't confident that the sediment/silt traps about to be created in the redevelopment works will be regularly checked and cleaned out. Elsewhere the QPWS has done nothing to monitor or measure the movement of sediments and chooses to turn a blind eye to what it deems is an insurmountable problem. There has been no attempt to stop this sediment that has been overflowing the silt traps installed beside the road adjacent to the lake in the last three years. Such indifference to arresting this critical sand movement doesn't inspire confidence in the current management of Fraser Island.



The platform above is a result of sediment movement from the old FIT carpark. On 27th March, coir logs had just been installed to surround the redevelopment site to stop sediment moving off the site. FIDO wants precise monitoring of the amount of sand bypassing silt traps.

While Queensland and Commonwealth Government funding may be making Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) more attractive and accessible for visitors, FIDO believes that the current redevelopment is hastening the lake's degradation. We have asked the Ministers to have sediment traps installed below the project area to measure the volume of sand migrating down dune slopes from the redeveloped day-use area. Installing this inexpensive equipment would do much to improve the QPWS's and the public's understanding of the migration of sand on the Fraser Island.

Cooloola Heritage Hits the Headlines

FIDO was among the earliest proponents of the Great Sandy Region World Heritage region when the concept was first put forward by the Australian Conservation Foundation in 1974. However for inexplicable reasons the World Heritage Committee stalled on including Cooloola when they inscribed Fraser Island on the list in 1992. FIDO has long argued that Cooloola is just as deserving as Fraser Island for global recognition. When opening the Cooloola Great Walk, Kate Jones also formally opened on a joint Queensland and Australian Government effort to extend the Fraser Island World Heritage Area beginning with a public consultation process.

Another Great Walk

On 27th March Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change Kate Jones opened the \$1.35 million Cooloola Great Walk. This is the ninth in a series of ten State Government-funded Great Walks throughout Queensland. The spectacular 102 kilometres long walk has four camping areas for overnight breaks and is expected to take five days for walkers to cover the whole length.

The walk links the Noosa North shore to Rainbow Beach via the eastern high dunes, the upper Noosa River and Poona Lake with a total of 102 kilometres of track. It passes through Cooloola's rich diversity of vegetation from rainforest to heathland plains, including perched lakes, a sandblow and coloured sands with spectacular scenic lookouts at Mt Seawah, Double Island Point, Rainbow Beach and the Carlo Sand Blow. An extra 14 kilometres of track has been added to take walkers via the picturesque Double Island Point lighthouse.

The Cooloola Great Walk is all located on the eastern side of the Noosa River. It is additional to the long standing Eliza Fraser Wilderness trail that runs on the western side of the Noosa River through its western catchment of wallum country from East Mullen to Elanda Point

The new Great Walk complements the Fraser Island Great Walk which FIDO and NPAQ are planning to extend by 50 kms. When the George Haddock Track is completed it will enable walkers to take a through walk from Noosa to Inskip Point, catch the ferry there and then take the 120 km long distance walk on Fraser Island from Hook Point to Arch Cliffs or Dundubara

Global Recognition for Cooloola at Last

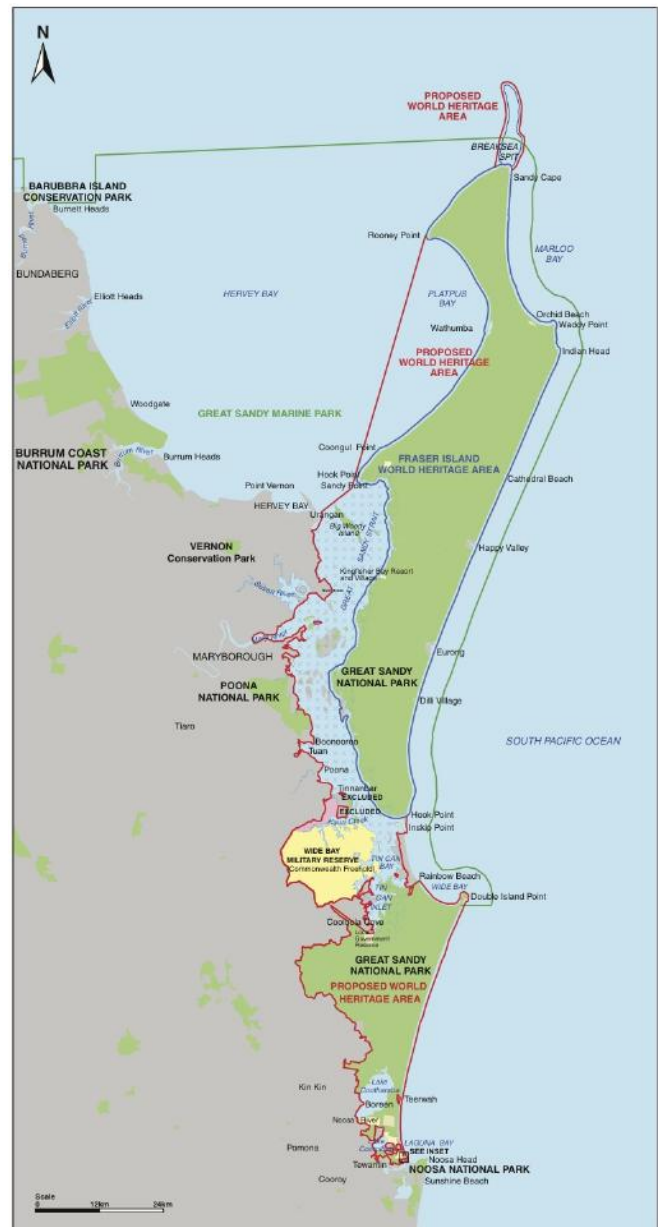
Calling for comments on the proposed new World Heritage boundaries is the beginning of a lengthy process requiring much community consultation before the formal nomination can be resolved.

Cooloola forms part of the world-famous sand dune system associated with the Fraser Island World Heritage Area and shows the evolution of life within a low nutrient, acidic, sandy environment and is a haven for large numbers of different life forms including many rare and endangered species. Like Fraser, Cooloola has exceptional natural features and areas of natural beauty with its stunning lakes, massive dunes, long wide beaches, giant forests and wide plains of heath. It has an abundance of native species including a wide range of bird species, quolls, turtles and frogs.

FIDO is encouraged that the Queensland Government believes that Cooloola has the qualities of being universally unique and worthy of protection for future generations. This has enormous economic potential for the region.

The closing date for submissions is 19 May 2010. Submissions can be made online, by post or by email.

The proposed area also includes Breaksea Spit to the north of Fraser Island, Platypus Bay, Great Sandy Strait/Tin Can Bay Ramsar Area and Wide Bay Military Reserve.



Maps and brochures are available from the Queensland Dept of Environment and Resource Management or from: http://www.der.m.qld.gov.au/parks_and_forests/world_heritage_areas/pdf

FIDO will be making a submission but mainly to enlarge the boundaries in the marine areas to incorporate some stunning submarine geomorphology off the northern shores only identified by Prof Ron Boyd in the late 1990s.

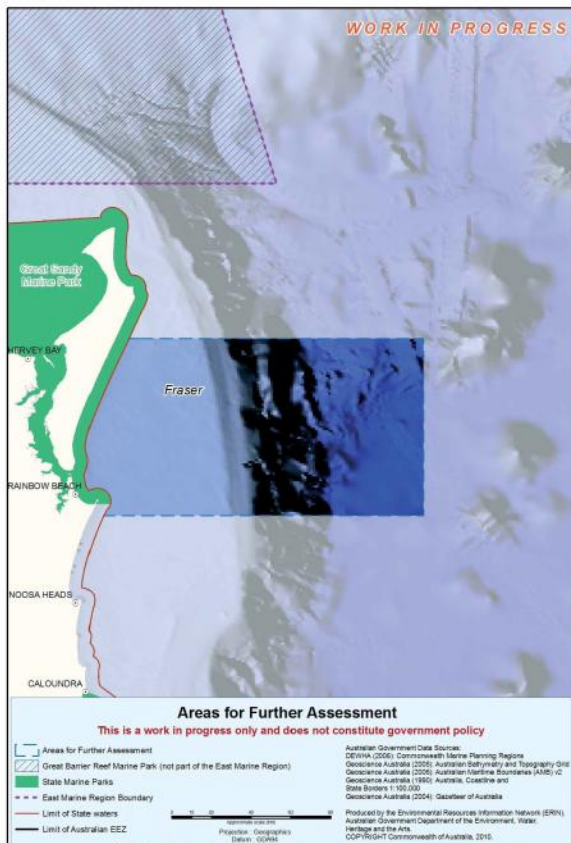
Federal moves to expand marine protection

In an effort to better protect Australian marine resources the Commonwealth Government has initiated a major process to assess prospects for better protection of the marine environment which has major implications for Fraser Island. A proposed 13,042 km² area (between 3 and 100 miles) off Fraser Island is one of the areas identified. Even before the assessment proposal had begun Nationals Senator Ron Boswell and the commercial fishers of Tin Can Bay were demanding compensation.

On 24th March Federal Environment Protection Minister, Peter Garrett, released the paper "Areas for Further Assessment for the East Marine Region" that identified a series of proposals to assess the unique economic and environmental values of the Australian east coast marine environment. He said the ongoing process would inform the development of a network of 'multiple use' and 'no-take' marine reserves in Commonwealth waters throughout the region, covering 2.4 million square kilometres from the Torres Strait to southern New South Wales, and as far east as Norfolk Island.

Fraser Island is one of seven areas in Eastern Australian waters identified for further assessment. The others are Tweed, Clarence, Hunter, Batemans, Tasmanid-Lord Howe and Norfolk.

The area is adjacent to the Great Sandy Marine Park (QLD) and includes nationally and internationally significant habitat for turtles, whales, dugong, seabirds and migratory shorebirds. The area also includes an aggregation site for the humpback whale. Seafloor features including canyons and shelf edge rocky reefs are represented in the area. The area connects coastal waters and deeper ocean environments. There are three provincial bioregions represented in the Fraser AFA. These bioregions are representative of endemic demersal fish species as well as mixing areas (or transitions) that capture overlaps in the range of species (i.e. the edges of their range).



The proposed conservation objectives for reserve(s) established within the Fraser area for further assessment are:

1. representation of the following provincial bioregions: Central Eastern Shelf Transition; Central Eastern Transition; and Kenn Transition
2. protection of seafloor features (e.g. slope and abyssal plain) and associated ecological processes and biodiversity across a range of depths
3. protection of the canyons of the continental slope and shelf edge rocky reefs
4. protection of an aggregation area for the humpback whale
5. maintenance of ecological connectivity between coastal waters (e.g. seagrass meadows and reefs of the Great Sandy Marine Park) and deeper ocean environment and
6. enhanced protection for areas adjacent to nationally and internationally significant habitat for turtles, whales, dugong, seabirds and migratory shorebirds (i.e. Great Sandy Marine Park).

The fury of the commercial fishers

Although the proposal, was put out as a "work in progress," subject to public submissions, most in the fishing industry are up in arms already claiming that hundreds of Fraser Coast jobs could be on the line (especially at Tin Can Bay) if a government plan to impose no-fish zones in waters off Fraser Island gets the go-ahead.

They have tried to recruit amateur fishers to knock out the planned zoning but the plan leaves a three mile strip out from the beach open for beach fishing, but bans all reef fishing, trawling, crabbing and scalloping from there to about 160km off shore.

Trawlermen claim that the seas out from Double Island to Fraser Island cover grounds vital to trawler operators and some claim to get "100% of their catch there: and that the area yields *"millions of dollars worth of prawns, scallops, spanner crabs and fish each year"*.

National Senator Ron Boswell has already held out a hand demanding compensation before the assessment process has begun. He said, *"It's going to cost a lot of money, that square just outside Fraser Island (identified as an Area for Further Assessment), it's got \$12 million dollars worth of spanner crabs in it, that's just spanner crabs. People have got to know, what is their compensation before they lose their business."* Sen Boswell said up to 100 boats fishing from Mooloolaba, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Tin Can Bay fished the 13,000sq km area off Fraser Island. The fishing centre most affected would be Tin Can Bay where 42 people are employed on trawlers. They claim that a fishing ban would shut down their town's economy, wreck lives and hit businesses and jobs from Gympie to the coast that supply commercial and recreational fishers with accommodation, equipment, supplies and professional services.

The George Haddock Extension to the Fraser Island Great Walk

During January and March volunteers representing the National Parks Association of Queensland, Queensland Bushwalkers, the Butchulla people and FIDO completed the task of defining the preferred route to extend the Fraser Island Great Walk from Lake Garawongera to Arch Cliffs passing five of Fraser Island's unique perched dune lakes — Hidden Lake, Lake Coomboo, Lake Freshwater, Lake Allom and Lake Bowarrady. Four of these lakes will only be accessible to hikers. The route passes close to the island's most pristine and spectacular rainforest on the island at the headwaters of Eli Creek.

This is the first stage of the most ambitious walking track project yet undertaken by volunteers in Queensland. It aims to honour the late George Haddock who contributed indefatigable voluntary service for Fraser Island, National Parks and community organizations. When completed the George Haddock Section will add over 50 kilometres to the Fraser Island Great Walk. The route chosen is removed from motor traffic and has been determined on gradients, environmental values and aesthetics.

This project has the approval in principle of Queensland Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change, Kate Jones, provided that the sponsoring volunteer organizations produce an Environmental Impact Statement and Cultural Heritage Assessment that meets requisite standards.

Now that the preferred route has been delineated, the challenge is to undertake those studies. This needs to be done before work can commence on the track work and associated infrastructure of toilets, shelters and signage.

A distinctive name: The stunning Fraser Island long distance walk deserves a unique and distinctive name to differentiate it from Queensland's 12 other Great Walks. Other famous walks such as the Milford Track in New Zealand, the Overland Track in Tasmania and the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia have internationally known names. The name proposed is the Kgari Track. (*Kgari* is the Butchulla name for Fraser Island).

When the George Haddock Section is added, the Kgari Track will pass beside 12 spectacular lakes and traverse spectacular heathlands and rainforest. It will establish a 150 kilometre through-track on Fraser Island through the interior of the island without going on any beaches and complement the recently opened 102 kilometre Cooloola Great Walk from Noosa to Rainbow Beach immediately to its south. It also offers access to the trackless northern part of Fraser Island for wilderness walks.

The Kgari Track is destined to become Australia's most popular long distance walk because of the scenery, climate, sand and location on the continent's east coast,.

The new walks make it possible for ambitious bushwalkers to spend at least two weeks intimately exploring the Great Sandy Region on foot without traversing the same track twice.

The George Haddock Walk is a joint initiative of FIDO and the National Parks Association of Queensland who are the Project Coordinators. The project is now in urgent need of funding to enable the critical assessment work to proceed. The lack of finance to cover some of the logistical costs to undertake the Environmental Impact Statement is slowing work on advancing the project to the construction stage. There are many volunteers wanting to participate but work can't begin until the planning process has been completed and assessed. Tax deductible donations can be made to the NPAQ, PO Box 1040 MILTON CENTRE Q 4064.

Planned Infrastructure

The coordinators of the George Haddock Track are proposing to build enclosed dingo-proof shelters with sleeping and cooking benches along the lines of those used on the Bibbulmun track in Western Australia rather than establishing hikers camp grounds as currently exist on the Fraser Island Great Walk. Veteran bushwalkers consulted have expressed a unanimous preference for these shelters. They may also have less environmental impact than alternative campsites. Four (4) such shelters are proposed for the George Haddock Section — all between 10 and 13 kms apart — at Pine Hill, Lake Coomboo, Lake Allom and Lake Bowarrady.

The Environmental Impact Statement will consider this when we finalize and submit the proposal.

- * Hikers shelter have a much smaller footprint on the landscape than a fenced off dingo-proof 100m by 100m. yard. To allow about 15 people to sleep would affect an area of about 15x20 metres
- * It would be easier to maintain the hiker shelters as dingo and crow proof areas than the alternative type of campground even with dingo proof lockers.
- * Hikers would be safer from falling branches in tall timber areas. A well-supported iron roof would provide better protection than thin fabric.
- * The iron roof would provide a water catchment that would be a great advantage for hikers. A tank for drinking water is proposed for each site. Other forms of water supply have significant environmental impacts.
- * The shelters would provide an under-cover sleeping bench, the edge of which would also serve as a seat, shelves for storing food and a bench to enabling cooking to be done under cover in any weather.
- * The option of not having to carry a tent would make this walk more attractive for hikers planning long distance walks because of the extra food they need to carry in this remoter part of Fraser Island.
- * The existence of such shelters would be most advantageous and help volunteers undertake the requisite walk on the track construction and maintenance.

Toilets are proposed to be provided at three of the shelter sites while the Lake Allom shelter would be able to take advantage of the existing day-use toilet.



End of George Haddock Section at Arch Cliffs

Dingo Issues

The public's obsession with discussing dingo issues on Fraser Island isn't matched by the public's understanding of the issues involved. About a third of all media articles related to Fraser Island in the last six months have been related to dingoes. A handful of residents don't like having dingo fences around the townships; many people including the LNP opposition in Queensland want to set up feeding stations for dingoes and the latest discovery that the dingoes may be the oldest breed of dogs in the world follows global analysis of the DNA of dog breeds around the world. This is just a brief digest of some of the current issues.

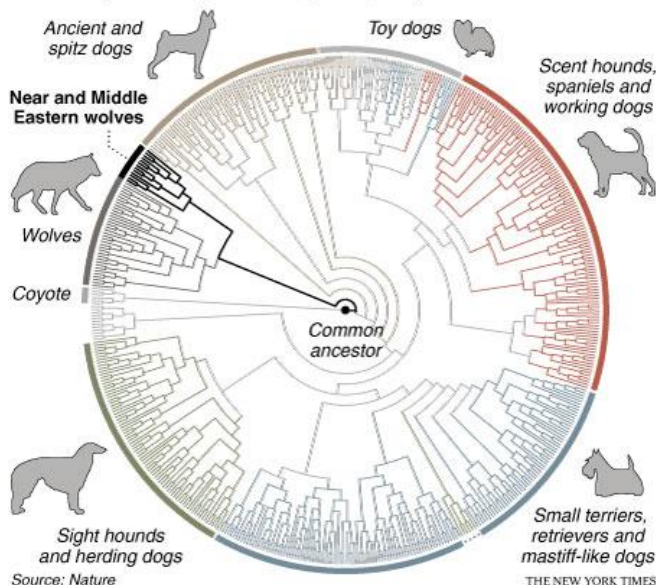
Dingoes — The Oldest Dog Breed

In an international study published in the journal *Nature*, it is suggested that the dingo is the most closely related to wolves and may be most like the original domesticated dog as it was across Asia and the Middle East thousands of years ago, according to one of the 37 authors of the study, Dr Alan Wilton, of the UNSW. The paper examines the domestication of the dog from the wild wolf using genetic differences. 48 000 sites in the dog genome were examined in hundreds of wolves, almost a thousand dogs from 85 modern breeds of dog and several ancient dog breeds. The data suggests that most dogs were domesticated in the Middle East, which was the cradle of agriculture 10 000 of years ago. Dingoes, which have been separated from other breeds of dog in Australia for the past 5 000 years, are the most distinct dog group with most similarity to wolves.

Dog domestication and human settlement occurred at the same time as agriculture was evolving, some 15,000 years ago. This raises the possibility that dogs may have had a complex impact on the structure of human society. Dogs could have been the sentries that let hunter gatherers settle without fear of surprise attack.

From Ancestral Wolf to Modern Dog

A genetic study of 85 breeds suggests that dogs are most closely related to Near Eastern wolves, and were probably first domesticated in the Near East. A simplified family tree of the past 20,000 years is shown below.



Dingo Management Distorting the Budget: Most of the money spent on natural resource management on Fraser Island is devoted to dingo management. FIDO doesn't dispute that dingoes are part of the island's natural resources but most of the focus is actually not on managing the dingoes but on preserving the safety of Fraser Island visitors. Thus spending on implementing the Dingo Management Strategy should be attributed to recreation management.

Domestic dog on the loose: The problems of hybridisation and the introduction of domestic canine diseases to the Fraser Island dingoes was highlighted when a domestic dog was let loose on Fraser Island over Christmas. In defiance of the rules on taking domestic pets to Fraser Island, an island visitor took his cattle dog to Eurong. It is alleged to have been old and almost deaf. It wasn't restrained and it escaped. It was never recovered. It is most probable that the dingoes would have killed it as they are very territorial and have tight-knit packs that don't welcome any intruding animals.

Health issues: It is vital for all wildlife on Fraser Island to maintain a healthy population of dingoes because without them secondary predators such as foxes and cats would take a heavy toll on the birds and small mammals. Ignorant people who insist on taking domestic pets don't appreciate the heavy impact their selfish actions might have. **Parvovirus** spread by dogs had a devastating impact on the dingo population in the 1970s. It can kill dogs and dingoes through gastrointestinal tract damage and dehydration. FIDO understands that the dog owners were fined.

Camps closed due to dingoes: Just prior to Christmas DERM closed off One Tree Rocks and Cornwalls campsites near Lake Wabby because several dingoes had been behaving aggressively toward people. Two groups of juvenile dingoes were seen circling and entering these two campsites. Three months later as these camping areas were being re-opened, other campsites near the Maheno had to be closed to campers because of the behaviour of dingoes interacting with humans there. It seems that if unhealthy interaction between dingoes and humans continues in free-range camping areas, it will add to the reasons for eliminating free-range beach camping.

Dingo Photographer charged: The Department of Environment and Resource Management brought 46 charges against a photographer after seizing her camera and computer gear during a raid of her Rainbow Beach home in August last year. Rainbow Beach resident Jennifer Parkhurst was charged in January with offences related to feeding and interfering with 17 dingoes, including six puppies, over 13 months. They include allegations she lured dingoes with food, followed them into a natal den and filmed inside it. A second Rainbow Beach resident is facing five charges of interfering with dingoes. The investigation also led to a State Government ranger being sacked. Parkhurst has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The debate over the management of dingoes has now become party political. Several LNP parliamentarians have expressed their support for feeding dingoes on Fraser Island and for people who do feed dingoes. There have even been attacks on the RSPCA for failing to support the establishment of dingo feeding stations. So far there has been no statement that an LNP Queensland Government would make dingo feeding stations part of its government practices. FIDO believes that would be expensive and ineffective in preserving a natural dingo population and would not make the island safer.

Moon Point Freehold Developments

Just before last Christmas two freehold blocks of 188 and 121-acre blocks at Moon Point were put on the market for a total of \$700,000. FIDO previously had successfully opposed one development application for this Moon Point freehold and has long urged the Government to acquire these blocks to avoid future management issues with the national park. However because such a large percentage of Fraser Island and Cooloola is already represented in national parks, government priorities for national park acquisitions are for ecosystems grossly under-represented in national parks and there, therefore, seems to be no money available to acquire them despite the enormous potential savings on management costs if it can be guaranteed the land will remain undeveloped.

The three levels of government are relying on the following to avoid any incompatible development with the National Park and World Heritage values of Fraser Island:

1. Local: The land is defined as Conservation Zone of the Hervey Bay Town Plan which requires that the World Heritage environmental values of Fraser Island are conserved and enhanced;
2. State: The blocks for sale are in or near the Wild Rivers Area which have 200m setbacks;
3. Federal: Any development even building a house would have to be subject to scrutiny under the EPBC Act

Sustainable Visitor Capacity Report

In MOONBI 120 FIDO indicated that a letter from Kingfisher that had been withheld from the FOI release may explain why the SVC Report has not been made a public document. Since then, an external review of FIDO's FOI request made to the Information Ombudsman has shown that Kingfisher's letter was not related to the SVC not being publicly released.

FIDO wishes to unreservedly apologize for any inference that Kingfisher may have prevented the SVC's release.

Since the DERM refused to either release the report officially or explain why they won't, the mystery remains as to why something that so much cooperative effort went into preparing is gathering dust somewhere on a bureaucrat's shelf.

FIDO's Weeding Operations resumed

The absence of FIDO's weeding operations coordinator Laura Simmonds on an overseas exchange in the latter part of 2009 temporarily suspended our weeding operations in the Fraser Island townships. However, Laura is back and her partner, Brad Jeffers led a willing team of 7 volunteer weeders working mainly in Eurong from 18-24 April. The coordination of the efforts by FINIA (a coordinating group of all stakeholders concerned with preserving Fraser Island's natural integrity) is making FIDO's efforts much more effective especially in complementing the work of other teams. FINIA has also seen much more community support to control the weeds in the main centres of infestations — the townships. Meanwhile FIDO and others continue to advocate better bio-security to prevent the introduction of more weeds to the island.

Malaysia's World Heritage management puts Queensland's to shame

In January FIDO Honorary Project Officer, John Sinclair visited two World Heritage sites in Malaysian Borneo — Kinabalu and Mulu. He was very impressed particularly by Gunung Mulu Gunning National Park in Sarawak

Although the 52,865 ha Mulu is about a third the size of Fraser Island, it has tremendous biodiversity. Its 3,500 vascular plants are five times more plant species than found on Fraser Island. The vast limestone caves (Deer Cave has a roof 300 metres above the floor and you could fly a 747 into it) hold an inestimable number of bats (several million).

However it wasn't the World Heritage values that made such an impression but the superb and sustainable management that the Malaysian authorities have established there.

- * No cars are allowed in Mulu. People have to walk to all major sites although they can take a longboat ride on a river to visit some sites up-river. No cars are allowed in the park. The only motor vehicles seen are small motorcycles for staff to take their children to school.
- * There are at least 5 or 6 kms of tracks and substantial walkways. One boardwalk along a cliff face must have been a challenge to construct.

We stayed in accommodation provided by the Park. We did three tours — Two cave tours and the 500 metre long tree tops walk. All required a guide accredited by the park. All were local indigenous Penans and they were very good

- * Although Mulu reportedly attracts only 35,000 visitors annually, Malaysia has installed an infrastructure that shames the paltry or non-existent Queensland efforts on Fraser Island.

How can a developing country like Malaysia do so much so well for 35,000 visitors annually and Queensland that reaps the financial rewards and kudos for 350,000 visitors to Fraser Island fail to do enough to stop the degradation there? Worse, why are the Queensland and Australian Governments so indifferent to the degradation occurring on Fraser Island?

Readers can see some of John Sinclair's photos and fuller reports at <http://www.randomkaos.com/node/13> and <http://www.randomkaos.com/node/14>



This is one of the boardwalks constructed between the most popular destinations in the park so that few of the 35,000 visitors ever leave a hardened path during their visit to Mulu Park.

Attacking Sharks in the Great Sandy

Between 1 January and 20 November 2009, 52 sharks were caught off Rainbow Beach including a four metre tiger shark. This is part of an expensive Queensland Government program to reduce the public paranoia over the rare possibility of a shark attack while swimming in the ocean. Apart from sharks in 12 months, 16 dolphins, 6 whales, one dugong, 109 sting rays and 30 turtles became entangled in the nets. While some survived and were released alive, FIDO is concerned that this shark netting program at Rainbow Beach impacts on the health of the Great Sandy marine environment. It is occurring within a few kilometres of the Wolf Rock marine sanctuary established to protect the endangered Grey Nurse sharks and it occurs within the Great Sandy Marine Park. If the public paranoia over sharks and snakes were equated to actual risk, few people would ever travel by motor vehicle where the odds of being killed or seriously hurt are infinitely greater.



Studying Fraser's deadly spiders

Further to the Backgrounder on Funnel Web spiders, there is more to be known about the venoms they produce. Although there are about 40,000 species of spiders in the world, the Fraser Island funnel-web is one of the few deadly spiders in the world. Scientists from the University of Queensland have been studying it and it produced more than 1500 venom peptides, only one of which was toxic to humans. Queensland scientists have developed a world-first database that catalogues the venom components from hundreds of spiders. This will enable scientists worldwide to investigate how spider toxins could be put to good use as natural insect sprays or pain killers. Fraser Island Funnel web spiders are helping significant scientific advances.

Rising Temperatures and Less Rainfall
 As of Easter, Maryborough had registered 486.mm of rainfall over 58 days. This should be compared with average rainfall for the same period for the 100 years from 1908 to 2008 of 581.1mm over 52.7 wet days. Temperatures for the period remain measurably higher. While this data is for Maryborough, it is an indicator of weather on Fraser Island. No data on the wind measurements were available although there were two significant low pressure systems operating in the first quarter of 2010. However beach erosion was less severe than in 2009.

FIDO also fights for Straddie

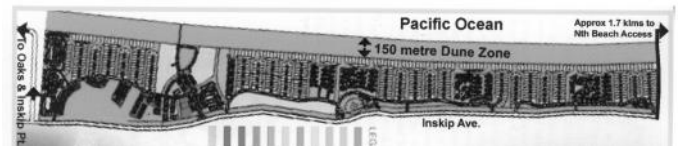
FIDO's interests are not limited to Fraser Island. It was widespread public support that helped FIDO bring a halt to sandmining on Fraser Island in 1976. Now residents and lovers of Stradbroke Island say "enough is more than enough" and are trying to persuade the Queensland Government not to renew the mining leases that have now expired. FIDO is part of a coalition helping to garner support for their calls for the government to terminate leases currently before the government for renewal and instead turn the land into national park. Visitors to Straddie are fed up with being locked out of more and more of the island because of the mining leases and the mining companies' performances in rehabilitation and want to free their island of the disfiguring mining operations.

When will there be \$\$ for Indian Head?

While the Queensland Government allows the cancerous erosion on Indian Head to spread further and further, it has contributed to a \$220,000 facelift with the installation of a world-first eco-friendly boardwalk on Straddie's North Gorge Walk at Point Lookout. The impressive construction uses a renewable plant-based product that replicates hardwood.

Like the light rail proposed to solve Fraser Island's debilitating sediment movement from roads, anything to rectify the terrible disfiguring erosion at Indian Head isn't even on the Queensland Government's agenda. Instead the QPWS now annually spends over \$1M annually to fly Fraser Island rangers back to their mainland homes daily.

Inskip Point Issues



On another front, FIDO is engaged in a court case to fight an appeal by the proponents of the Rainbow Shores ribbon subdivision along 5.5 kilometres of a narrow strip of land between Rainbow Beach and Inskip Point which would create 1,140 houses, 1,030 apartments, 360 resort units, 700 resort rooms. This would potentially add 6,523 people to the population of Rainbow Beach. Although the Queensland Government and the Gympie Regional Council are opposing the appeal over this controversial development on the doorstep of Fraser Island, conservation groups have joined the appeal to ensure that our issues of concern are fully addressed.

Kingfisher for Sale

Expressions of interest in buying the assets of the multi-million-dollar Kingfisher Bay and Eurong Beach resorts closed on 14th April. Kingfisher Bay Resort Village Group and Japanese-owned Cosmos Australia have been partners since they developed the resort village in 1990. Cosmos has decided to pull out of its offshore interests, leading to managing director Gary Smith and his partner, finance director David Goodman, deciding to sell the assets by expressions of interest. It is being sold as a package that will allow the buyer to cover all areas of the island.

Meanwhile the Kingfisher group has almost completed the transfer of their marine operations to access the Kingfisher Resort from Urangan to Mary River Heads with the opening of the new terminal at River Heads Shopping Centre in April.

FIDO Policy on private developments in the Great Sandy National Park

Changing patterns of recreation: While FIDO believes that there is a disproportionate amount of resources devoted towards recreation management rather than natural resource management (as demonstrated on Fraser Island where the recreation to natural resources ratio is about 9 to 1) FIDO believes that it is important to change the patterns of recreation so that a much better share of the budget and management effort can be devoted to protecting the island's natural resources.

There can be little doubt that private developments either using land inside the park or being located adjacent to it have at least as much influence in shaping the patterns of recreation as tradition. This can be demonstrated by the focus of recreation focused on the Kingfisher Resort that has existed on Fraser Island for less than two decades. Prior to that, a negligible amount of Fraser Island recreation was based along Great Sandy Strait.

Similarly the recreation in the northern part of the island is the result of Orchid Beach developments over the past four decades. Orchid Beach was also promoted by Toyota as a ploy to market its products through a Fishing Expo. In short the patterns of recreation seem to be more a product of private and commercial investments than any other single factor.

Thus while there is widespread major concern over allowing any new commercial developments to be located on National Park land, we need to be very aware of the impacts that developments adjacent to the national parks can have. This is why FIDO pays so much attention to what is happening in the settlements on Fraser Island and the mainland adjacent to it.

FIDO has shown the environmental impact of the current patterns of recreation to be unsustainable. It is not sustainable when visitation to Fraser Island results in over a tonne of sand for every visitor shifting down slopes in subsequent rain events. The greatest impact per visitor results from tourists carried in 4WD buses.

FIDO argues that these privately owned buses are as much a part of the infrastructure as would be a locomotive and rail line. Thus FIDO can see no philosophical or ideological reason for opposing the concept of a privately operated light rail operating on Fraser Island if such infrastructure can be demonstrated to reduce the environmental impact of recreation and visitation.



The beach in front of Kingfisher Resort taken in 1987

FRASER ISLAND DEFENDERS ORGANISATION LIMITED

NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thirty-third Annual General Meeting of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited will be held at 1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO 4151 at 7.30 p.m., Thursday, 12th August, 2010.

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.

BY THE ORDER OF THE BOARD

John Sinclair
Honorary Secretary
DATED this 22nd day of April, 2010

PROXY FORM

33rd Annual General Meeting

I,
(Please print in BLOCK letters)

of
being a of Fraser Island Defenders Organization financial member

do hereby appoint
or failing him/her as my proxy, to vote on my behalf at the Thirty-third Annual General Meeting, to be held at 1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO Q 4151 at 7.30 p.m., **Thursday 12th August, 2010** and at any adjournment thereof.

Signedthisday of, 2010



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 909 TOOWONG Q 4066 by Tuesday, 10th August, 2010**

Nomination Form for FIDO Office Bearers

To be returned to: Secretary, FIDO, PO Box 909 TOOWONG Q 4066 by Tuesday, 10th August, 2010

We,and
being financial members of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization

hereby nominate
for the position of for the 2010 - 11 term

Signed..... Nominator

Signed..... Seconder

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