



MOONBI 122

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

FIDO's Registered Office: c/- Stephen Comino & Arthur Comino, G2 425 Milton Road, Milton, 4065 ABN 59 009 969 135

FIDO's Postal Address: PO Box 909 TOOWONG QLD 4066 Editor: John Sinclair, #1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO Q 4151

MOONBIs since 1996 and all FIDO Backgrounders can be found at www.fido.org.au Email: john@fido.org.au

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Since MOONBI 121

State Sponsored Degradation: Having manipulated the truth on community support for an ill-advised and preconceived redevelopment plan for Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) the QPWS has spent \$3.4M on a flawed site. During the six months that the public was excluded from the site, commercial tour operators were given exclusive access. Unsolicited comments from group members at FIDO's 1st August inspection was that the lake shore has been so modified now with fences and structures that it has lost much of its former attractiveness. While working on this flawed site, the QPWS has totally ignored the truckloads of road wash pouring into the lake elsewhere. A government appointed advisory committee has identified this as a priority. Likewise there are no plans being advanced for addressing the most serious degradation of Indian Head and many other very obvious sites of degradation on Fraser Island.

What Plans and Reports?: Whatever plans DERM and the QPWS have for Fraser Island, they are now closely guarded secrets that are unlikely to be divulged any time soon. This is because the Queensland Government has used the excuse of lack of financial support from the Commonwealth Government to cut off all communications with any of the three Advisory Committees. Between 27 April and 9 July only three communications were sent to committee members and nothing since. This, combined with the lack of any form of reporting including removal of reports on Fraser Island in the Departmental Annual Reports, and unanswered or very cursorily answered queries show an alarming lack of transparency. FIDO was able to gain more information from the very hostile Bjelke-Petersen government than it is able to extract from the Bligh Government which seems to be locking doors on both communication and consultation.

Inspiration: We have decided to ignore the regular political injunctions to keep emotions out of consideration and state just why emotions are so central to our lives and identify some or the sources of inspiration for our emotions. In this issue is an essay on why places of Inspiration, and Fraser Island is certainly one outstanding example, are worthy of preservation. It is not just the landscape but the trees that inspire and it is FIDO's contention that the indifference over looking after even the special trees on Fraser Island is indicative of a lack of appreciation to preserve those things about Fraser Island that inspire.

Inspection: FIDO has been very active in recent months with two weeding operations since April and a weekend inspection in August as well as other visits by FIDO members to monitor progress on Fraser Island plus working with the NPAQ to advance the George Haddock Track on Fraser Island to the approvals stage. The President's Report and a report on inspections are included in this issue.

FIDO Turns 40. It is hard to believe that when MOONBI 123 comes out next year FIDO will have turned 40. We include a flier for our forthcoming FIDO @ Forty Conference scheduled for 29 July 2011. Reserve the dates now and any suggestions or contributions for the Conference will be most welcome. You can help by downloading, printing and distributing these fliers.

Backgrounders: MOONBI 122 carries 3 backgrounders. FIDO backgrounders analyze issues or attempt to summarize some very significant aspects of Fraser Island that need to be considered as part of the total Fraser Island picture. So far FIDO has published 45 Backgrounders. All can be downloaded from our web site: www.fido.org.au.

Saving Fraser's Wild Dingoes puts FIDO's case for strongly opposing any artificial feeding of dingoes.

The First People of Kgari provides a background history of the Butchulla people from the Dreamtime to 1905.

Preserving the Natural Integrity of Fraser Island outlines the three main threats to integrity FIDO has identified.



FIDO other conservationists and the Sunday Mail inspect the flawed Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) redevelopment site .

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 Inspiration of Trees

The value of trees is immeasurable. Trees provide us with wood and fruit. They provide habitat for fauna and a variety of other flora. Attention is now increasingly being focussed on the capacity of trees and forests to sequester carbon as one means of addressing Climate Change. Trees make economic and ecological contributions to all forms of life on earth in many ways. However it is the intangible impact that trees make through their inspirational values that is so often overlooked. Certainly artists including Sir Hans Heysen and Albert Namatjira were inspired by Australia's ancient gums, but it isn't only artists who are inspired. Few people fail to be awed by some forest giants or trees thousands of years old. While New Zealand has its giant kauris and Tasmania has its amazingly ancient Huon Pines, Fraser Island has trees FIDO claims were growing there before Christ walked on Earth. FIDO is urging more recognition be given to these trees of outstanding significance.

Reverence for trees of significance: There are trees of such significance that people make pilgrimages to see and experience them. One such tree is New Zealand's *Tane Mahuta*, ("King of the forest"). This is the largest remaining kauri tree. The 1500-year-old *Tane Mahuta* is 51.5 metres tall, with a girth of 13.77 metres. In the United States, the most heavily visited National Park is San Francisco's Golden Gate National Park where Muir Woods attracts millions annually to gaze in awe at this collection of giant redwoods

In Australia, thousands annually cruise up Tasmania's Gordon River to admire with awe the ancient Huon Pine at Heritage Landing. Those people who see the Styx River Valley's giant Swamp Gums (*Eucalyptus regnans*), the world's largest flowering plants, are inspired. Western Australia's Valley of the Giants attracts people to negotiate the treetops walk through the canopies of giant Tingle trees.

Significant Trees on Fraser Island: As well as trees of archeological significance, Fraser Island has its own Valley of the Giants with Australia's largest living Tallowwoods, (Ti to the Butchullas) and enormous Syncarpia (aka Satinay, Turpentine or *Pibin* to the Butchulla) with the largest known living Syncarpia in the world. It has even been given its own name — *The Fitzgerald Tree*. Then there are ancient Melaleucas.

Losing significant trees: In the past, many significant Fraser Island heritage trees were lost due to fire or natural death and attrition as well as to the timber industry. Several of the trees lost were archeological relics. During FIDO's 40 years of observing Fraser Island, many gunyah trees, canoe trees, and trees where Aborigines once robbed native bees for honey have disappeared. Many disappeared without having even been identified by the QPWS, particularly those that housed native bee nests. As the number of trees of archeological significance diminish, the remainder become ever more significant.

A Fraser Island Tree Register

In 2007 FIDO expressed concern over the lack of recording of trees and the associated interpretation of significant trees to minimize further losses that might be avoided. FIDO proposed a program to identify and register trees of significance on Fraser Island. This *proposal* was strongly supported by the Fraser Island World Heritage Community Advisory Committee. However, the QPWS has yet to devote any resources or put any effort in to identify and record major trees. This is curious when Fraser Island is a World Heritage site and trees of significance should be identified as being amongst the values that need both recognition and protection. There is a reluctance to know what natural resources there are on Fraser Island because this might add to the obligations to protect such resources.

Trees of Great Antiquity:

FIDO has identified several ancient melaleucas of very special interest. The evidence, based on the rate of sandblow advance, suggests that they are more than 2000 years old. Although qualified scientists are yet to confirm our hypothesis, the evidence seems very clear. Melaleucas are usually associated with swamps and wetlands and these melaleucas now never have wet feet. It is FIDO's hypothesis that they were growing in swamps in the paths of sandblows before the sandblows advanced.

As the sandblows slowly engulfed them, they survived by putting out adventitious roots to stop them suffocating and enabling them to continue to transpire. Thus they survived by just keeping their heads above the sand.

The process is still occurring. Some Melaleucas on the eastern shores of Wabby Lakes germinated and became established on the shores of the lake in 1974. Their bases are now buried below several metres of sand. One melaleuca near Little Wabby's base may be buried more than 50 metres below the present now stabilized surface.

As the various sandblows advanced to bury other trees, ones that had been previously buried were exhumed. All other trees but the melaleucas were just dead wood. The Melaleucas' protective layers of paperbark helped them to survive the corrosive sand storms as the trunks and the adventitious roots were progressively exposed. Some of these ancient Melaleucas with their classic adventitious roots are now well over a kilometre behind the advancing front of the sandblows. If the rate of sandblow movement averaged only half a metre per annum these trees were probably growing well before Christ walked on Earth.



John Sinclair & ancient Melaleuca 1.5 kms east of Wabby Lake

Some of these Ancients were unknowingly removed at Kgari Camp and still more destroyed to make way for new Ranger quarters at Dundubara. More than a dozen died when a management burn on the northern walking track to Wabby Lakes got out of control a few years ago. Another was felled near the walking track from Rainbow Gorge in 2007.

Preserving Places of Inspiration

The September, 2010 National Geographic features some wonderful photos of Fraser Island. The accompanying six page article describes how significant Fraser Island was in inspiring Sidney Nolan and Patrick White. Nolan has been considered one of the 20th centuries greatest Australian artists while, so far, Patrick White is the only Australian to win the Nobel Prize for literature. Two of his novels were based on Fraser Island. The article didn't mention how the island inspired great musical composers such as Peter Sculthorpe. There are others less famous who have been inspired and also people in other fields of endeavours.

Valuing Inspiration

It is not only artists who are inspired. Places of inspiration provide retreats for spiritual renewal to enable greater subsequent achievements in a whole range of endeavours. Some of the great scientific discoveries are a result of encounters with Nature. The apple falling on Newton's head is probably the most famous.

Throughout human history there have been many places of inspiration. This is best demonstrated with how in England, the British zealously try to preserve the character of Constable Country that inspired that great artist or the Lakes District of Cumberland that inspired both poets and artists. In America, The Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite are more revered for their inspirational value than they are for their biodiversity and physical characteristics. The grandeur of Mt Everest has inspirational value beyond just its dimensional status and it isn't just the sheer numbers of wildebeest of Africa's Serengeti or the masses of flamingos that congregate at Kenya's Lake Nakuru, that make them noteworthy. It is the inspiration that we draw from such places and places like Antarctica and the Great Barrier Reef even if we never visit them.

It isn't only famous natural places that inspire and are regarded as so precious. Spiritual renewal by communing with nature is an unmeasured value. The Vatican may be a religious and a political hub but its inspirational value is such that even if the world's richest gold reef lay beneath it, the world would never allow it to be mined. Likewise throughout the world and throughout history, and covering every religion, people have found their various places of worship inspirational and millions have died to protect whatever it was that gave them inspiration. More people visit the theatre, art galleries and museums annually than attend sporting fixtures. Yet politicians are disproportionately generous in their support of sport compared with their support for protecting the places of inspiration. Unfortunately there is no measure of the value of inspiration in monetary terms. While as individuals we value places of inspiration enormously, rationalists (economists and others) ignore or completely devalue the inspirational worth of special places in the landscape.

It isn't only environmentalists, artists and scientists who are motivated by places of inspiration and it isn't only places inscribed on the World Heritage List that inspire. Historians and geographers value places of inspiration. Places like Burke and Wills Dig Tree on Coopers Creek inspire as do other historic sites.

Drawing on Inspiration

To counter the trend towards only assessing values in numerical and monetary terms, FIDO believes that a widely based coalition is needed to collectively campaign to preserve our precious and rapidly dwindling and degraded places of inspiration.

Increasingly politicians and leaders react to "performance indicators". This requires projects and growth to be measured in monetary or numerical terms. Inspirational values defy measurement. Because the value of inspiration is incalculable, those making "rational" decisions too frequently overlook and disregard values that many hold very dear and precious.

To counter the trend of assessing values only in numerical and monetary terms, a widely based coalition is needed to campaign to preserve our precious and rapidly dwindling and degraded places of inspiration.

A major public campaign is needed to shift the political focus away from assessing places such as Fraser Island and Stradbroke Island only for their worth in monetary values and get much more focus on what value such places have for inspiring art and other human endeavours.

Inspiration and emotion are intertwined. How would it be possible to be inspired and remain emotionless? Yet while ready to invoke emotions of anger or affection at election time, our politicians are reluctant to allow their political decisions to be based on any feelings of affection that our communities hold for their heritage and for places that inspire. Likewise they demand that people advocating protection of places of inspiration should leave emotion out of their campaigns.

Using Emotion: It is ironic that while some nations value landscapes for their inspirational qualities, too many Australian leaders try to ignore or discount the value of inspiration and are so deprecating of appeals to public emotion. Nobody should be afraid or ashamed of bringing emotion into any argument to advance the public interest. After all, it is emotion that influences most of the important decisions we make in our lives such as where we live, our faith and beliefs.

Soulless: The Australian public should not let our politicians get away with defending or helping corporations that are only committed to the bottom financial line. By Australian company law, corporations are not allowed to have emotions. Large corporations, especially those at the big end of town, are totally devoid of emotions other than crying if their profits fall. Yet although these soulless corporations are unable to vote, they are allowed to splurge to buy political favour and dictate terms and political outcomes. Unfortunately these soulless corporations do not value places of inspiration as conservationists have discovered around the world.

FIDO believes the time is overdue to establish a wider coalition of groups from conservation, the arts, science, religions and indigenous communities, Scouts, and historical and geographical societies to come together to collectively campaign for the preservation of places of inspiration.

Difficulty in Discovering What is Happening on Fraser Island

In FIDO's 40 year history it has never been more difficult to obtain information about the management of Fraser Island. This is at a time when the Bligh Government had passed legislation about the Right to Information and promised more open government. No other organization outside government is more interested in the overall management of Fraser Island and what measures are being taken to identify and protect its unique and outstanding World Heritage values than FIDO, yet the bureaucracy is treating this great natural treasure as if it was its own personal property and as if it isn't to be questioned.

Lack of Communication and Transparency

On 5th February 2010, the Fraser Island World Heritage Community Advisory Committee held its last meeting. There was a joint meeting of the Scientific, Indigenous and Community Advisory Committees on Fraser Island in April but there was no meeting to deal with matters specifically on the Community Advisory Committee agenda. Since April the only communication with members of the CAC emanating from the QPWS has been an Email advising of proposed new place names on Fraser Island.

As at the time of MOONBI going to press there were still no plans to set a date for any meetings although the Feds have assured Queensland that it will get the \$60,000 it requested for this purpose. This lack of meeting and reporting to stakeholders demonstrates DERM's and the Queensland Government's lack of any genuine commitment to openness and transparency. It should be noted that no member of any committee receives a fee. The \$60,000 goes to providing that salary of an Executive Officer and travel expenses for participants to attend the meetings.

DERM has used the excuse that it didn't have the \$60,000 promised by the Commonwealth Government towards the cost of the three Fraser Island World Heritage Advisory Committees, to not only unilaterally suspend all committee meetings, but also suspend all communication with them. When DERM claims to be spending over \$9M annually on Fraser Island, it seems incredible that it has made no provisions to cover the cost of convening any sort of regular meetings with stakeholders and with continuing to supply them with reports of activities. There is a clear impression that DERM/QPWS wants to avoid answering critical questions and being transparent and accountable. Even if there was a cost to staging meetings in Hervey Bay, there should not be any significant expenses in providing some basic reports!

Information on annual visitation and other statistics that were once published in the EPA's Annual Report under RAM once provided some form of information. This data is no longer published and any data provided to Advisory Committee Members is nominated to be confidential. While input is sought from the public on matters such as the proposed World Heritage boundaries, our submissions are not even acknowledged and we aren't kept informed of what is happening. FIDO was able to find out more about what was happening with Fraser Island during the Bjelke-Petersen era.



Seeing for Ourselves is the Only Option

To keep abreast of developments and changes on Fraser Island and to enable other conservation groups to be updated on Fraser Island issues, FIDO organized a three-day inspection 30 July to 1 August. It was fortunate and most helpful that the freshly appointed QPWS Regional Manager Great Sandy, Ross Belcher, was able to join us to get a better perspective of FIDO's positions. It resulted in a most refreshing exchange that gives us some optimism. The inspection also resulted in a very positive media coverage in *The Sunday Mail* on both the dingo issue, which resulted in some backlash, and the wider issues we are concerned about. This was followed up by John Sinclair who made a larger 8 day private survey of the island. These are some of the more critical matters noted:

Lake McKenzie's (Boorangoora's) \$3.2M redevelopment has achieved absolutely nothing to stop the water, sand and sludge from the road still pouring into the north east corner of the lake and seriously degrading it.

Lake Allom also continues to suffer infilling of both water and sediment flows from the road. This is now the most vulnerable lake on the island but no action to stop the flow into the lake is being contemplated by the QPWS.

Indian Head is in an appalling state and getting rapidly worse with the area of exposed rock at the summit visibly enlarging but there are still no plans to address the degradation in any way.

North Wathumba Road was as open as any road to within 100 metres of Platypus Bay despite being scheduled to be closed under the Great Sandy Region Management Plan. Some Orchid Beach landholders who want this management road formally opened for public use have reportedly resorted to crime to open it up.

Fire breaks continue to be widened but even the widest was proven to be incapable of stopping the 2009 fire in the southern part of the island when several were jumped. However so many large trees have been removed that the QPWS has now established its own log dump.

The George Haddock Track route and some of its features were inspected and support for this grows as the NPAQ and FIDO will be organizing fauna and flora surveys along the route before Christmas.

Wabby Lakes Northern Walking Track Fraser Island's most interesting short walking track was inexplicably and vandalistically closed without any public consultation and then reopened for 4WD Quads to gain emergency access but remains officially closed to the public

Some Improvements: We noted that the situation regarding two long-standing problems seemed to be improving. **The dingoes** were behaving more naturally and the **backpacker behaviour** seemed to be greatly improved since the introduction of tag-along-tours.

Renewing the Great Sandy Region Management Plan

The Great Sandy Region Management Plan took two years to prepare and was scheduled to operate from 1994 to 2010. FIDO is urging that the Plan be reworked urgently particularly in the light of our considered opinion that the existing plan has failed to meet its stated objectives.

Two of the key recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conservation, Management & Use of Fraser Island & the Great Sandy Region chaired by Tony Fitzgerald, Q.C in 1991 was that the whole Great Sandy Region (including Cooloola) should be nominated for World Heritage Listing and that there should be a Management Plan implemented to cover the whole Great Sandy Region.

So while the World Heritage nomination for the whole region was being advanced and considered, a Community Advisory Committee was established with a major role of drafting the Management Plan. That was done over a series of one and two day meetings in Gympie and resulted in the first draft of the Management Plan that was eventually adopted by the then Goss Government in 1994. The fact that there was to be a Great Sandy Region Management Plan was an important consideration in Fraser Island eventually getting World Heritage status in 1992. The fact that there was some concern about the management of some parts of Cooloola outside the National Park was given as one of the reasons for not then including Cooloola on the List.

John Sinclair Snr was a member of the Community Advisory Committee and contributed hundreds of hours to go to those Gympie meetings to work with a range of stakeholders with widely divergent views and objectives to thrash out the Management Plan. The group represented a range of interests including a representative of the Mary Valley catchment group. This was a recognition then of the importance of the flow of the Mary River in maintaining the health of the Great Sandy especially its marine environment. There were strongly put views on many issues but few more contentious than the decisions to establish vehicle free beaches and to close many of the roads and tracks created by the timber industry.

The Management Plan adopted was to span the period 1994 to 2010. However the Plan said explicitly: *"This Plan seeks to provide a framework within which the values of the entire Great Sandy Region may be protected in perpetuity. The year 2010 has been selected as a medium term planning horizon The plan will be reviewed and modified as necessary no later than five years from the date of approval..."*

The Plan did envisage the Great Sandy Region Management Act. However Queenslanders got neither a Great Sandy Region Management Act nor the five year review as promised but instead, after 11 years, in 2005 and without any public input or any opportunity for the public to discuss or comment, it got a "Revised Version" of the Management Plan.

2010 is almost over and the Department of Environment and Resource Management has yet to make any move towards the updating the Great Sandy Region Management Plan (with public input) before the Great Sandy Region is renominated for World Heritage Listing with a whole set of new additional WH values identified.



Why the Plan Needs Urgent Re-examination

FIDO is making a contribution to a Special Issue of the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland on dune islands and coastal sand masses. After deciding to prepare a paper on "What World Heritage has meant for Fraser Island" we have been astonished as we have begun a critical examination of the pluses and minuses.

Our conclusion goes like this: *After a 21-year campaign Fraser Island was listed in 1992. The management of the 99 percent of the island was then entrusted to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Although commercial logging ceased in 1991 and a Great Sandy Region Management Plan was adopted in 1994, significant environmental degradation continues.*

Visitation has increased by more than 50% since listing, resulting in a huge diversion of the proportion of public expenditure on Fraser Island from natural resource management to recreation management. Visitor pressure continues to impact on the island's natural resources and World Heritage values. There is evidence of the degradation of the lakes both by infilling and in the water quality. Dingo management has become a major issue only since the Listing. The number of weed species has continued to increase despite ever greater efforts to control them. Fire ecologists continue to argue that the fire regime is far from optimal due to a lack of priority and resources. Climate change is already visibly impacting on the island's environment but less research is now occurring on Fraser Island than before World Heritage listing. Despite the establishment of advisory committees to facilitate communication with stakeholders there is now less transparency over Fraser Island management than during the 1990s.

Auditor General Condemns DERM's Failure on Management Plans

In the light of this sobering assessment FIDO was interested to note that Queensland's Auditor-General is also heavily critical of the state's National Park management, particularly with respect to Management Plans or rather the lack of them. In his report "The Sustainable Management of National Parks and Protected Areas", tabled in state parliament on 3rd October, he found that only 98 out of the state's 576 protected park areas had management plans. He found 83 per cent of parks are at risk due to not having compulsory management plans.

The report said, "The [Nature Conservation Act 1992] requires the plans to identify the key natural and cultural values, and strategies for day-to-day and long-term management to protect these values." and "The Act also states that plans should be prepared as soon as practicable after the dedication of a protected area." He also concluded that without park management plans, conservation activities undertaken may be insufficient, or inconsistently applied over the long term.

In response Kate Jones said there isn't enough money allocated to implement park Management Plans anyhow!

News in Brief

The outcome of the Federal Election

The Election of a minority Federal Government has had its impact on Fraser Island. If a Coalition Government had been elected the proposed Marine Reserves off Fraser Island and Cooloola (and elsewhere in Australian waters) would have been perfunctorily scrapped without the investigation which we presume that the Gillard Government will continue with. The new Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke made it a high priority to get to the opening of the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) redevelopment and was apparently most impressed by his first visit to the island although due to other prior commitments, FIDO was unrepresented at the event. FIDO is seeking a meeting with Minister Burke who currently has much to deal with in other parts of his portfolio such as population and water. However all of these aspects are related to Australia's environmental carrying capacity.

Upgraded Paramedic Services

It was difficult to convince the Queensland Government that there was an urgent need for an ambulance service on Fraser Island but eventually they reluctantly conceded. Recently the ambulance service was upgraded to a full-time 24-hour station. Two full-time paramedics are now based at Happy Valley. The OIC has since seen sprains, strains, bumps, cuts, fractures and countless bites and stings, (sandflies, mosquitoes, spiders) and occasional dingo bites, as well as many injuries caused by people themselves, with tent pegs being a prime culprit, as well as fish hooks which often find their way into anglers' fingers.



One of Peter Essick's stunning photos from the September, 2010 *National Geographic* magazine's feature on Fraser Island.

More International Attention

The September 2010 edition of the famous *National Geographic* magazine featured a sweeping story by American born, Australian citizen and British resident journalist, Roff Smith and stunning photographic display of Fraser Island. It is a wonderful article but when John Sinclair attempted to open a Japanese edition of *National Geographic* to show some friends He was disappointed to discover that of all of the articles in the Japanese printed version, the Fraser Island article was the only one that was missing. However Tourism Queensland's US office is reported to have valued the publicity at almost \$US4 million.

Cooloola — Now a RAM area

On October 17, 2010, the Cooloola Recreation Area came into effect. A new recreation area will cover more than 60,000 hectares of environmentally significant land in Cooloola from Noosa North Shore up to Rainbow Beach.

The most significant aspects of the new RAM Area are:

- * A new 2.5 kilometre, vehicle free zone between Teewah and Noosa Heads.
- * Vehicle permits, similar to those operating on Fraser and Moreton Islands, with a day pass option for visitors.
- * Commercial activity permits for the expanded conservation areas in the region.
- * Some dog and vehicle restrictions.

While FIDO welcomes this initiative which has received some political bi-partisan support there has been some fierce outrage from some 4WD fanatics, trail bikers and Rainbow Beach residents who may now need to pay to take a casual beach drive to dip past the brilliantly coloured sand cliffs.

With such a precious finite resource as Cooloola coming under increasing pressure from a range of recreational users, it was inevitable that some new restrictions and a new management regime was needed. With Cooloola now slated for World Heritage Listing in the not too distant future, these pressures are only expected to increase. FIDO has advocated World Heritage status for Cooloola since the mid 1970s and included it in our 1984 World Heritage nomination prepared for the ACF.

FIDO believes that as more people appreciate the outstanding natural values of Cooloola, they will stop longer to enjoy them for their own sake instead of just using it as a void to be speeded through to get from population centres to its south to spend time on Fraser Island. Cooloola deserves so much more attention and should not just be a by-pass.



Fraser Compared with other WH areas

In January, John Sinclair visited two Malaysian natural World Heritage sites, Mulu and Kinabalu. In September he explored two of Japan's three natural World Heritage sites. Yakushima Island (about 1,000 kms south of Tokyo) is famous for its ancient cedars and as well as other interesting subtropical flora growing on a small island that receives up to eight metres of rain a year. Most of the ancient cedars have individual names and one has been aged at 7,200 years old. Shirakami Sanchi (about 1,000 kms north of Tokyo) includes the last virgin remains of the cool-temperate Japanese beech forest that once covered the hills and mountain slopes of northern Japan.

Apart from attempting to appreciate the great natural values of these two magnificent sites, John Sinclair was also exploring their management and two particular aspects — the role that volunteers are playing in their management and the how the sites are being presented in Visitor Centres. His illustrated report will be posted on FIDO's web site. However in seeking to discover how volunteers are employed at Yakushima, he discovered that the young Japanese volunteer coordinator there had also worked on Fraser Island for several weeks including as a volunteer!

Some News Snippets

USL: There are reports abroad that much of the USL (Unallocated State Land) on Fraser Island is about to be allocated. It was proposed in the Great Sandy Region Management Plan in 1994 that the USL within the Eurong and Happy Valley townships (where most of it is located) would be converted to National Park status. That has not yet happened.

New Native Title Claim: A new native title claim that encompasses Fraser Island, Inskip Point and some land and water near Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach has been lodged. The Butchulla People, who first applied for native title over the land in 1998, were unsuccessful with their first attempt and that claim was discontinued. Other attempts over the years have been dismissed. Now they have a new claim which covers about 1650 square kilometres or the entire land mass of Fraser Island, and one that covers about 6829 km² over waters off Fraser Island, land surrounding Hervey Bay, Maryborough, north of Tin Can Bay and Inskip point.

Whales in Hervey Bay: The 2010 whale watching season in Hervey Bay is now over and for the next 8 months there will be less traffic movement in and out of the Urangan marina. The good management of Hervey Bay's lucrative whale watching industry continues both by tour operators and the Marine Parks Sector of the QPWS.

Dingoes: This MOONBI has kept clear of reporting on the continued controversy relating to the Fraser Island dingoes. Our position is clear and our observations are that while some dingoes are lean and almost all are always on the lookout for food, most appear normal and healthy and are behaving naturally.

Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora): FIDO has inspected work done in redeveloping the day use facilities at a cost of \$3.4M, \$1.8 million from the Federal Government and \$1.6 million from the State Government. FIDO doesn't agree that the money was well spent and we are worried that it won't stop tourism continuing to degrade this iconic lake as road runoff continues to pour into the lake and sediment from the redeveloped site will migrate towards the lake.

Rabbits on Fraser Island's Doorstep: When Woody Island became CSIRO's test area for the myxomatosis virus in the post-war years, it became the first and only place in the world where myxomatosis succeeded in eliminating the entire rabbit population. Rabbits had been placed on Woody Island and had decimated its vegetation. It was then assumed that the Great Sandy Region had been permanently purged of rabbits, but they have now turned up in Cooloola and numbers are reported to be growing. This seriously threatens the natural integrity of the region. It underlines the importance of stricter quarantine for Fraser Island to avoid introducing unwanted pests — animal or vegetable.



Fraser Island's War With Weeds

While there has been some significant progress made to contain the weed infestations on Fraser Island particularly in its urban centres, the situation regarding weeds continues to deteriorate. While FIDO has the volunteers and the desire to do much more to address the island's weed problem, we are hampered by lack of resources. We are already spending more than half our meagre income just to organize two weeding weeks per year and now funding for FINIA is running out.

Not only is Fraser Island's list of alien plants continuing to grow, many of these introductions are perniciously spreading. Most plant introductions were made without people even being aware that the plants would become serious weeds. Some of the worst were introduced unwittingly because their origins (seeds or vegetative propagation material) arrived on the island as hitch-hikers in freight, luggage or in various forms of 4WD vehicle debris. However it isn't the most obvious and most conspicuous introductions, such as Lantana, Umbrella trees, Easter cassia and groundsel that are creating the greatest long-term headache for the island, it is the grasses and other plants that provide low ground cover such as Singapore Daisy.

While larger weeds can be controlled by physical removal, eliminating such grasses on a large scale is going to be difficult. Most grasses produce prodigious volumes of seeds and spread quickly, particularly those with wind borne seeds. However, many grasses grow from runners and once established, they aggressively spread and crowd out much of the competition grasses, eventually replacing them.

Some tall grasses such as green panic are readily noticed and while it continues to be spread about the island it can be dealt with because it can be easily seen and it relies less on runners.

FIDO has recently noted that all of the original native couch in the northern section of Eurong has been replaced within the last ten years by a new exotic grass that is spreading. This exotic weed that has crept in silently without being noticed is going to be as difficult to bring under control as the cane toads on Fraser Island.



Some Tidiness & Much Rubbish

The obsession with maintaining tidy house lots is creating such incredibly large and growing heaps of garden waste in Eurong that, apart from their sprawling ugliness, are presenting a very significant fire hazard. These mounds of garden waste can't be burnt in situ because they are immediately opposite residences. The same risk exists for these residences if these dump sites accidentally catch fire. Yet nobody seems to worry and as people tidy their yards, they add the waste to these increasingly ugly and increasingly dangerous piles. FIDO has drawn attention to this previously but the problem persists and it seems that nobody is responsible.

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Overall 2009/10 saw some of the same areas of concern for Fraser Island continuing with the development of the parking and toilet facilities at Boorangoora (Lake McKenzie), the fevered campaign in the media to set up feeding stations for dingoes on Fraser island, and the proposed development of Rainbow Beach/Inskip Point. New and worrying concerns are the apparent discontinuation of the Community Advisory Council and the Bligh government's proposals for private development in National Parks. However, impressive progress has been made by parties of volunteers to chart the George Haddock extension to the Great Walk.

During last year, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service engaged designers to plan the changes to the parking and facilities at Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) but, despite forewarning from FIDO, did not inform the designers of the need to put these facilities on the other side of the rise so that sediments flowing into the lake from visitor activities would be slowed. This massive project, which is near completion, has the potential to increase the present devastating road runoff of sand and nutrients into the lake. The runoff from the road is a problem that has not been addressed as the road still passes too close to the lake.

The issue of dingo management has continued. With the media beat up about Fraser Island dingoes starving and needing to be fed by rangers at feeding stations, FIDO invited the new regional manager of QPWS, the media and members of conservation organizations to accompany its members on their annual inspection on Fraser Island the last weekend in July. We saw 5 dingoes, all in extremely good health, and a following article in 'The Sunday Mail' as well as the Backgrounder written by the Project Officer will hopefully educate the public on this issue. FIDO believes that dingoes definitely should not be fed by humans.

Concern about the proposed development, Rainbow Shores, at Rainbow Beach/Inskip Point has led a FIDO member to research and become involved in preventing this potential environmental disaster.

Freedom of Information searches have also been done to try to ascertain why the study into Site Visitor Capacity has not been available to the public. FIDO laments the lack of communication between the QPWS and interested organizations.

FIDO also supported the moves to end mining leases on Stradbroke Island and to turn the majority of the island into a National Park.

FIDO is still concerned about a program to rehabilitate and better manage Indian Head which has become appallingly degraded in recent years. This will be another ambitious volunteer project that FIDO will attempt and we hope it will deliver benefits equivalent to the Eli Creek Boardwalk FIDO initiated back in 1981.

In the meantime an impressive volunteer programme has started with the NPAQ to honour George Haddock by extending the Great Walk to Arch Cliffs with huts at camp sites to give walkers access to many wonderful lakes. We hope this may help change recreational patterns on Fraser Island.

FIDO continues its on-going weeding program and currently has a team of volunteers working at Eurong and Happy Valley under the guidance of Laura Simmons. This is the second such weeding operation we have sponsored

this year and it is a major element of our annual expenditure. FIDO also cooperates with FINIA which receives funding and carries out other weeding programs.

The 2011 conference entitled 'Patterns of Recreation in the Great Sandy' is in the planning stage at present with a flier ready.

This year the publication of "Moonbi" and the production of educational Backgrounders continued.

Although there has been disappointment with the lack of progress on getting a light rail transport alternative on Fraser Island, FIDO continued to get advice on developing a business plan and has considered who could be approached to finance the system. FIDO believes that it is only private businesses like that running the Light rail that would benefit the natural environment that should be allowed in National Parks.

FIDO advocated the extension of the proposed marine park on the eastern side of Fraser Island to include the amazing sand falls off the continental ledge at Break Sea Spit.

FIDO is 40 years old next year and it has been decided to celebrate this landmark with a publication. Plans are being made for this publication.

The continuing concerns FIDO has for the protection of Fraser Island fall under five main headings:

- (1) unsustainable levels of visitation, and the associated need for a light rail system;
- (2) the failure to adequately protect the marine resources,
- (3) unacceptable environmental impacts from the management of the fire strategy,
- (4) recognition that climate change will have a greater impact on the natural integrity of Fraser Island than tourism, timber extraction and sandmining combined, and
- (5) developing alternative more sustainable (and safer) patterns of recreation.

I want to thank our office bearers, John Sinclair (Project officer and Secretary), Jane Enchelmaier (Treasurer), Andrew Sinclair, Terry Hampson, John C Sinclair, Ian Matthews, (Vice Presidents) Laura Simmons (Weeds co-ordinator) and Saren Starbridge, John Davey and Keith Sinclair for all their work for FIDO.

The need to protect wild places is ever greater with the growth of population and the pressures this brings to places like Fraser Island.

*Colleen Enchelmaier, President
12 August, 2010*

