



MOONBI 133

MOONBI is the name given by the Butchalla Aborigines to the central part of their homeland, Fraser Island or "K'gari"

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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Backgrounder The Hottest Year Yet: When we review 2015 and think of some of the positive gains made by FIDO with the conference, getting on top of the weeds in Eurong and Happy Valley, etc, it would be easy to be deluded that K'Gari is doing well. The reality is any progress is being more than offset by negative factors outside of FIDO's control. For example, countless tonnes of sand were scoured further downhill along K'Gari roads. The hottest year on record has taken an unknown toll on all forms of life on K'Gari. It also energized forces to erode K'Gari's vulnerable coast. Further the fire regime in practice is less than ideal.

MOONBI Changes: FIDO is 45 years old and maturing. FIDO's role has changed from advocacy to more on-ground work and collaborating with other groups and agencies to achieve a better outcome for K'Gari. Similarly the role of our newsletters has changed. The introduction of *K'Gari E-News*, the upgrading of FIDO's web site and our distribution of K'Gari news from the internet, means that MOONBI can be a more reflective journal. This issue deals with some philosophical issues in greater depth as well as relevant news items that may otherwise escape attention.

The Value of Vicarious Visitation: This two-page essay (pp2-3) challenges the current approach that puts a huge premium on the people who actually go into national parks while virtually ignoring that our parks have great value for people who may never visit them. FIDO wants to see a new approach to appreciating the National Parks. They are key and critical parts of Queensland's Heritage. They need to be managed for more than their physical visitors.

Natural Integrity: There are many aspects to natural integrity. Impacts on natural integrity such as climate change require global solutions. Governments are responsible for getting fire regime right and controlling visitor levels. Invasive pests and weeds and repairing impacts resulting from local human modifications to the landscape can be addressed locally. These are issues being addressed by FIDO working with FINIA. (p4) Other issues impacting on the natural integrity are discussed on page 5. These include the need for information to be available to the public and public interest groups, the need for establishing a statutory Management Plan for K'Gari and the imminent review of the Great Sandy Marine Park which has failed to provide protection for more than a miniscule 3.81%.

Patterns of Recreation: The volume of sand moved on K'Gari as a result of vehicle and pedestrian traffic is alarming. It requires imaginative changes to the patterns of recreation to address the causes of this sand movement to make visitation more sustainable. That is why FIDO prioritized the spending of the imminent generous bequest to fund a Feasibility Study into an alternative form of visiting K'Gari — a light rail between Eurong and Kingfisher Resorts. (See p6) MOONBI also compares and contrasts the

approaches of the Tasmanian and Queensland Governments to creating walking tracks in beautiful natural areas. (see p7)

Call for Volunteers: FIDO is seeking volunteers to work on maintenance of the George Haddock Track over the Easter weekend. Anyone wishing to receive more details of this or the weeklong weeding operations in the second half of the year should contact: john@fido.org.au.

News in Brief (p8) covers earthquakes, landslips, research initiatives, ocean cruises, cash for containers, Irukandji, K'Gari's western beach and more. They are useful updates

Backgrounders: Balarrgan (North White Cliffs) that has played a pivotal part in K'Gari's recorded history. Backgrounder 74 is the 3rd of a series on this place. Two other backgrounders 75 and 76 deal with the trends in National Park visitation and the positive part that places like K'Gari play in benefitting public health.

Mnemonics: Soil scientist, the late Cliff Thomson, helped our understanding of K'Gari's Outstanding Universal Value by explaining the nexus between soil development and vegetation types. Backgrounder 77 uses mnemonics to describe the basic attributes of the six dune systems that Cliff described almost 40 years ago. Like the new Fraser Island (K'Gari) logo these mnemonics and the new Nature Walk that FIDO has created at Eurong aim to help people better understand this remarkable World Heritage site.



This cutting on the Woralie Track between the beach and Lake Allom has developed into a canyon over 2 metres deep, demonstrating the scouring of disturbed sand discussed on p.5. The man behind the fallen tree stands at 183 cms.

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Valuing vicarious visitation

An essay on the role of national parks

by John Sinclair AO

Australian national park management priorities have significantly shifted from promoting and protecting Nature to recreation management and to regarding National Parks as instruments of economic policy. Recreation is over-riding other considerations for Nature in our national parks. In few places in Australia is this more evident than on Fraser Island. The bulk of the relatively meagre budget to manage Fraser Island (K’Gari) is derived from fees collected as a Recreation Management Area and so a direct catering for recreational use takes a clear priority. The ratio of expenditure on recreation management is five to eight times greater than the portion spent on natural resource management. The reason that the ratio of spending is so vague is due to whether the spending on dingo management (for public safety) should be attributed to natural resource management or recreation management.

What is certain though is that there has been a cultural change since the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service abandoned its publicity section to promote and interpret Nature. Many people in the past enjoyed and benefitted from these insightful creative initiatives explaining the role of Nature. Creative artists such as Steve Parish began their careers there. Without this focus on Nature, Queensland National Parks are only managed for the visitors who turn up.

Little thought is given to the vast majority of people who derive value from national parks without necessarily physically visiting them or who visit them only occasionally such as members of the public who have never personally visited sites such as Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) but who hold those places in special affection.

Without knowing my connection to Fraser Island, a pharmacist recently remarked that she loved the “blue lake” (Lake McKenzie) even though she had never personally seen it. As a child, I treasured Lake McKenzie and other now fabled Fraser Island icons from stories my parents told me of their visits on their honeymoon in 1935. I never got to see this fabled lake until I was 19 years of age.

Stuart Broad, English Test Cricketer, who has never visited Fraser Island, said in a 2015 media interview, *“When I get more time to visit other parts of Queensland, I really want to go to Fraser Island. As a child, I used to love reading a book that my stepmother had about it on our shelves at home. The island has beautiful, still turquoise water and golden beaches. I’d love to go there and find out if it lived up to my hopes.”*

There is a constant and very audible public murmur that Fraser Island is being over-run with 4WDs. Demands are made for a cap on visitor numbers and vehicle free beaches. Politicians and park managers choose to disregard these comments. Instead they are guided by visitor surveys that only sample opinions of people who actually present themselves on Fraser Island (K’Gari). The opinions of the bulk of the population who have never been to K’Gari but who have views on visitation

are consistently ignored. These have been vaguely sampled in surveys by various newspapers where the murmur referred to above dominates the letters to the editors and the opinion surveys.

Vicarious visitation is like the appreciation of Banjo Patterson’s poetry. The public does not need to participate in a reenactment of the *“Man from Snowy River”* nor travel with *“Clancy of the Overflow”* to benefit from the writing. Not everyone needs to visit the Louvre in Paris or other art galleries to appreciate great works of art such as the *“Mona Lisa”*.

The public derives value from viewing Sidney Nolan’s Eliza Fraser series of paintings without seeing him paint or from reading Nobel prize-winner Patrick White’s *“Eye of the Storm”* and *“Fringe of Leaves”* describing Fraser Island or from listening to Peter Sculthorpe’s *Great Sandy Symphony*.

Natural resource management refers to the **management of natural resources** such as land, water, soil, plants and animals, with a particular focus on how **management** affects the quality of life for both present and future generations (stewardship).



People don’t need to visit Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) to appreciate its outstanding aesthetic appeal. Once having seen it though, memories of its natural beauty are conjured up in the mind even by the very mention.

Vicarious experiences are not to be undervalued. Many celebrities have fan clubs full of fans that have never had contact with them. People don’t have to go to the Abbey Road studios to appreciate the recordings produced there. If vicarious experiences weren’t

valuable then there would be no live sport on television. Indeed television would have little point in existing.

I have dealt with film crews producing documentaries on aspects of Fraser Island from a range of countries from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy and France. Few of the people who see these documentaries will end up visiting Fraser Island but all derive some pleasure and benefit through watching these programs.

A public opinion survey in the 1990s showed that a remarkable 93% of Australians wanted Antarctica left as an untouched wilderness (with allowances for scientific research). Not all of that 93% of Australians (indeed only a tiny proportion) nurtured a desire to actually visit Antarctica. These examples help illustrate that the value of National parks should not be judged on visitor numbers. Managing national parks should never be based purely on tourist demands.

That is why this organization (FIDO) is so concerned at the change in management priorities only to recognize a responsibility to those people who visit National Parks while ignoring the wishes of those who are concerned about National Parks without visiting them. Indeed many Queensland taxpayers have expressed the view that there needs to be a limit on the number of visitors to National Parks such as Fraser Island. This view needs to be respected.

To assess only the views of those who only see it from the seat of a vehicle and/or a beach campsite is ridiculous because it is so biased by excluding the views of those who may never visit. It is equivalent to formulating plans for management of the Great Barrier Reef based only on the views of fishermen and those who come via mass tourism. In a recent interview with David Attenborough, Barack Obama spoke glowingly about the Great Barrier Reef - and the need for its protection. Barack Obama may never have seen the Great Barrier Reef and may never see it, but he clearly values it. Should the opinion of the world's most famous naturalist or the President of the United States be cast aside because they weren't interviewed on site?

Many people don't actually need to go into a National Park to derive value from it if they can get benefits outside it. In world-class national parks with Visitor Centres, many people spend more time at the Visitor Centres and reading the interpretive signs than physically exploring and studying Nature. Does it matter that the visitors don't get to see a koala, a turtle nesting, a rare crayfish or a Richmond Birdwing butterfly if they know about them and know that they are in a particular park. Interpretation is important yet despite this, the amount of interpretation in national parks is shrinking and hopelessly out of date and in cases quite inaccurate. The Queensland Government has recently said that it has Visitor Centres at Walkabout Creek (Brisbane), Fleay's Sanctuary (Gold Coast) and Mon Repos (Bundaberg) and it isn't

planning on any more. This was a clear statement that vicarious and curious visitors to many national parks will not be catered for.

A visit to Girraween National Park (which isn't funded from recreation fees) reveals a much greater attention to the protection of Nature. Whereas Fraser Island "roads" are progressively being transformed into gashes or canyons in the landscape by erosion, the attention to minimizing erosion at Girraween deserves high praise. FIDO's moves to find a long term solution to this long term problem have been rebuffed by the QPWS as just too difficult even though FIDO is willing to put up initial moneys to get the project of a light rail from Kingfisher to Eurong moving. Nobody seems to even wonder how difficult it might be for small mammals to cross some deep-cut roads nor to what is happening to the vegetation or lakes being smothered by the sand displaced from those deep gashes.

The integrity of wild places should be maintained for their own sakes. It must have been wonderful to have seen K'Gari's massive trees and variety of plants that existed as they were before the advent of Europeans. These places are needed for the production of oxygen as well as water. Many eco-services are provided by natural places. Natural landscapes such as mountains, forests, wetlands and rivers have a lot to do with stable climate, clean air, clean water and healthy food for humans but not many people in the street would know or think about that.

Queensland's population is becoming increasingly urbanized. While there is an increasing element of agoraphobia amongst this population that deters them from getting into the bush, it doesn't mean that they don't want wild places to exist and to be protected. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has to stop imagining that its primary role is only to manage the people who present themselves in person in the parks and start to think more creatively about meeting the demands and expectations of people who may never set foot in their national parks.



Fraser Island Funnel-web siders are genetically homogeneous and have a distinctly different peptide profile to mainland *Hadronyche infensa* populations, a consequence of long genetic isolation on the world's largest sand island. Scientists are examining their extremely toxic venom in seeking cancer cures.

Preserving Fraser Island (K’Gari)’s Natural Integrity

FIDO’s top priority is the protection of the natural integrity but it is not a role exclusive to FIDO. FIDO has dealt with the impacts of sandmining and logging. Now the main threats to Fraser Island (K’Gari)’s natural integrity come from climate change, the fire regime, invasive pests and weeds and unsustainable tourism. These need to be addressed collaboratively.

FINIA Turns Ten

Since 2005 the Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance (FINIA) has played an ever larger role in focusing the attention of voluntary groups such as FIDO and NPAQ, Butchulla, Queensland Government agencies, and local government on our mutually shared goal of protecting K’Gari’s natural integrity. The lack of a constitution or bank account hasn’t stopped FINIA being a most effective organization in bringing together so many partners concerned with protecting the natural integrity of Fraser Island (K’Gari) to work collaboratively on a range of projects.

FINIA was an inspired idea of BMRG’s Sue Sargent who has led it since it was formed. FINIA has helped gain closer cooperation between the various players concerned with the management of Fraser Island. The result has been very productive for all concerned. Examples are everywhere.

Co-operation and collaboration. FINIA’s focus began with weeds but its vision now extends well beyond that. Weeds in Happy Valley and Eurong and the Sandy Cape Lighthouse are being progressively brought under control. It has addressed problems such as dealing with cane-toads, the dreadful pandanus dieback and marine debris. FINIA was instrumental in helping to restore the natural integrity of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) after part of it was fenced off. This fencing detracted from the aesthetic appeal of this most recognizable icon of Fraser Island. FINIA is a supporter of the Fraser Island biennial conferences. It has a very good web site (www.finia.org.au) but its greatest achievement has been improving the collaboration and cooperation between the various stakeholders. FIDO’s productivity has been significantly enhanced through FINIA contact.



FINIA Chair, Sue Sargent, plants a pandanus at Dilli Village assisted by FIDO’s John Sinclair to mark ten years since FINIA was formed at Dilli Village.

Nature Note

The Ant and the Sundew



CSIRO soil studies in Cooloola identified 280 species of ants. It is expected that Fraser Island contains at least that number, but the research on that has yet to be undertaken. Several ant species are regarded as sand swimmers because they are able to move easily through sand. Of the billions of ants, the ant in the photo is one of many caught by Sundews (*Drosera* sp).

Sundews are carnivorous native plants that catch insects on the sticky “dew drops”. These “dew drops” contain enzymes that then digest the proteins from the insect and kill them in the process. Because they are getting their energy from the insects caught, they don’t need to photosynthesize. Thus the plants don’t need chlorophyll and are therefore red rather than green. They also can survive in soil with extremely low nutrients.

FIDO’s Volunteer Program

Over the past five years FIDO has organized more than 25 week-long working bees on Fraser Island that have attracted volunteers from as far away as the Atherton Tablelands and Bunbury in Western Australia. Last month we had a volunteer from America, a retired Ranger from the Golden Gate National Park. Although FIDO’s building of the Eli Creek boardwalk in 1981-82 established FIDO’s regime for voluntary projects, it was his visit to that park in 1993 that inspired John Sinclair to step up FIDO’s volunteer program to work on the ground on Fraser Island starting with weeds.

FIDO is scheduled to hold seven weeklong projects to work on weeds specifically during 2016. Three of these will be based in Eurong and four in Happy Valley. In addition, FIDO is anticipating between two and four working bees on the George Haddock Track project. The difference between these two projects is the greater physicality required to work on the George Haddock Track than is needed for the weeding operation. FIDO seeks to provide transport to and from Brisbane to work on the weeds.

FIDO is looking for muscle with bushcraft skill to clear sections of the George Haddock Track in the northern part of Fraser Island (K’Gari) over the Easter period. Anyone interested should register with John Sinclair (Email: john@fido.org.au) Work on the George Haddock Track came to a halt at the end of 2014 while awaiting Native Title approval to proceed for some sections. While the Native Title issue has still not been resolved FIDO is planning to carry out maintenance on track work previous cleared during the Easter holiday period and is anticipating more weeding operations later in the year.

Need for Transparency and Reporting

It is difficult to be able to maintain an appreciation of the condition of Fraser Island (K'Gari) without any written reports. The Community Advisory Committee has long sought to receive written reports from QPWS management but there has been no written report on the overall management of this World Heritage site delivered to the committee or the public for over three years. When the Community Advisory Committee was first established, it met quarterly and there were comprehensive quarterly reports describing new discoveries of plants or animals, the fire program, visitor numbers and much more. There may have been staffing cutbacks but this should not entail an absolute cut off in the flow of information. If the information were on the internet there would be some excuse but none of the above vital information is on the internet site. The 2014-15 Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing Annual Report claims to *"actively engage and collaborate with ... (all clients) using a range of communication channels to build and maintain its relationships with clients and other interested parties, and to receive feedback and suggestions about its activities and direction."*

Getting one written report prior to a meeting at least once a year specifically about Fraser Island Great Sandy National Park would be better than receiving absolutely nothing.

No reporting equals no accountability.

Fire - A Management Tool

The very mention of fire in natural ecosystems is an anathema to some people although fire has been a particularly important part of Australian ecology for countless millennia. There is a growing consensus that there is much room to improve the fire regime on K'Gari. Several speakers at the last Fraser Island conference referred to it.

Aboriginal Australians were masters of fire to fashion the ecology. When European Australians took over the land from them, much of the Aborigines' very highly refined and attuned mastery of fire management was lost. It is an art that urgently needs to be rediscovered and applied. However Aboriginal fire regime may no longer operate in such a vastly modified landscape.

Fire and Weeds: Observations of the use of fire on Fraser Island suggest that fire has helped control very serious weeds infestations such as lantana and groundsel. On Fraser Island, fire management was recently carried out to protect property around Happy Valley. It coincided with one of FIDO's working bees to control weeds (especially Abris) at Happy Valley. There was an impressive and unanticipated benefit for FIDO's weeding volunteers. The fires made access to burnt areas easier and that benefit will endure to clean up burnt areas for some time yet.

Fire and Wildlife: Wildlife can significantly benefit from well-managed fires. While there may be some casualties, fauna populations generally benefit from fires. Further some fauna populations such as ground parrots suffer if their normal habitat lacks burning. Naturalists remark just how quickly many species of fauna move in on recently burnt areas because they have greater ease of movement. Many plant species disappear from the ecosystems the longer that some areas remain unburnt. **Getting the right frequency, distribution and heat of the fires is an art (science).**

Great Sandy Marine Park Rezoning

The review of the Clayton's Great Sandy Marine Park is due in 2016. When the current Management Plan was gazetted a decade ago only a miniscule 3.81% was dedicated as green or "no-take" zones. These are the marine equivalents of National Parks. Unfortunately most of these were small and scattered and this reduces their effectiveness. The IUCN recommends that 20-30% of all marine areas needs to be set aside as "No-take" zones to maintain the marine biodiversity and the productivity of the fisheries associated with them.

In 2003 the no-take zones in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park were increased from 4.6% of the vast area to 33.3%. It was a bold move at the time that was bitterly contested. Many commercial fishers ceased operation. Contrary to their dire predictions the creation of well-managed "no-take" zones around the world has been shown to increase the total harvest of the overall regions over time. Reports indicate that productivity of the Great Barrier Reef fishery has increased since it was rezoned.

Fish which develop within "no-take" zones spillover to augment populations outside reserves. Animals are most abundant inside reserves and just across their boundaries. This has been established at several marine reserves around the world. Moreover, fishing boats often congregate along the borders of marine reserves, because that is where catches are highest. This practice of "fishing the line" can be observed at many marine reserves.



Statutory Management Plan Needed

Even before Fraser Island's nomination was accepted by the World Heritage Committee in Santa Fe in 1992, the Queensland Government had established an advisory committee representing a diverse range of stakeholders to develop a Management Plan for the whole Great Sandy Region. This helped the success of the nomination. When the plan was completed in 1994, it was supposed to run to 2010. Curiously the Queensland Government failed to make it a statutory Management Plan under the Nature Conservation Act. That has allowed the QPWS an enormous amount of latitude and wriggle room to effectively interpret the plan as it likes. Even when the plan was revised in 2005 (without any public consultation), there was no attempt to give the plan any statutory status and it is, at best, a set of guidelines.

It is now years since the plan, adopted in 1994 and revised in 2005, was due to expire. It is testimony to the reluctance of the QPWS to see a statutory Management Plan that this situation has persisted for so long. World Heritage sites should be Jewels in the Crown of the Queensland estate. Instead Fraser Island management is left to whims and fancies. If the Queensland Government can't provide something more definitive such as a statutory plan that will protect one of the State's greatest assets, it needs changing.

Patterns of Recreation

Some people find it is easier to change their daily routine than to change their mindsets on some issues. One ingrained mindset accepts K’Gari’s patterns of recreation even though more than a million tonnes of sand have washed down or washed off the fragile sand tracks over the last three years. Most of this was sand stirred up by 4WDs. Ways to visit K’Gari can be changed for the better and change is needed.

Other states and other World Heritage sites have found imaginative ways to change patterns of recreation when established usage is significantly impacting on natural values. Existing K’Gari usage is transforming large sections of roads into canyons. Imaginative solutions are needed to stop the degradation of K’Gari while sustaining the tourist industry that generates more than \$300M for the Queensland economy.

The two biggest issues currently confronting Fraser Island management are (a) getting the fire regime right and (b) changing the patterns of recreation to make visitation more sustainable. Both have been enduring priority issues for FIDO but mysteriously the same issues are far from a priority for the hierarchy of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. QPWS is reluctant to respond to FIDO’s offer to fund a Feasibility Study into a light rail across Fraser Island from Kingfisher to Eurong.

Stirring up the Sand

Several things stir up sand. Boardwalks at Eli Creek and Central Station have successfully demonstrated how to prevent erosion along pedestrian paths. K’Gari sand/soil is very fragile and any disturbance particularly on slopes increases the potential load to be eroded in heavier rainfall. Evidence of very serious down-cutting on pedestrian paths on slopes lacking hardening or boardwalks is obvious at Indian Head (Takky Wooroo) and many other places on K’Gari. Boardwalks demonstrate how stopping pedestrian traffic stirring up the sand is a most effective and responsible way to minimize the environmental impact of visitation.



For decades now FIDO has been advocating some remediation of Indian Head (Takky Wooroo) where heavy pedestrian traffic has had enormous environmental impact. The skeletal soils have been scoured out along all pathways on the steep slope. Replacing the existing informal pathways with formal boardwalks could avoid further degradation.

The amount of sand stirred up by pedestrian traffic on K’Gari though is infinitesimal when compared with the amount of sand stirred up and the degree of down-cutting caused by 4WDs. Some roads have been cut down more than three metres. The extent of the down cutting of roads is dependent on the volume of traffic and the degree of slope. However the impacts are not just on the roads themselves but on the bottom of the slopes where the eroded sand ends up. Three lakes on Fraser Island are receiving varying deposits of sand washed down the roads. In living memory, Yidney Lake has been filled with so much sediment that it has ceased to be a wetland and is being progressively transformed into a forest.

Light Rail Alternative: The success of boardwalks in saving the fragile Fraser Island soils surface illustrates what can happen when there is no contact between the means of locomotion and the ground. It also demonstrates why FIDO so strongly supports a light rail for Fraser Island. Putting passengers on light rail means virtually no sand would be stirred up by vehicles moving on the rails because there would be no wheel contact with the ground. Light rail could carry so much more traffic with infinitesimal erosion compared with huge footprint of 4WDs on Fraser Island.

A Feasibility Study: FIDO has proposed to fund a Feasibility Study estimated to cost about \$250,000. It would be undertaken by independent experts and overseen by a collaboration of K’Gari stakeholders. It would:

- Determine whether FIDO’s assertion is correct or if there are better alternatives;
- Establish if a light rail is economically viable
- Provide some certainty on a proposed route and whether this route was acceptable to QPWS and the Butchulla Native Title holders

A different way to see K’Gari’s West Coast



K’Gari patterns of recreation are already undergoing some changes. The MV Tasman Venture uses this amphibious Sealegs craft to land visitors at places along Fraser Island (K’Gari)’s stunning west coast beaches. This site at the mouth of Bowarrady Creek happens to coincide with the proposed start of the George Haddock Track. At Awinya Creek these visitors kayak up the stream. At Sandy Cape they walk to some of the historic features around the lighthouse

The Tale of Two Tracks

It is interesting to compare how two different Australian states regard walking tracks. Queensland seems to regard walking tracks as an onerous responsibility that should be kept to a minimum and where maintenance is not a priority. Tasmania in contrast regards its walking tracks as great state assets that nourish that state's economy through tourism. This paper compares the approach in each state to the development of new walking tracks — the George Haddock Track on Fraser Island and the Three Capes Track in Tasmania.

Queensland and the George Haddock Track.

At the funeral of the exemplary conservation volunteer, George Haddock in 2009 FIDO and NPAQ first proposed to build the 52 kilometre walking track from Lake Garawongera or Dundubara to Arch Cliffs using volunteers. The QPWS had proposed the route years earlier to be part of the Fraser Island Great Walk but lacked the resources to complete it although it traverses some of the most pristine and spectacular parts of Fraser Island. The response was that FIDO and NPAQ would first have to submit an Environmental Impact Statement. This was curious because nobody ever saw any EIS for the Fraser Island Great Walk. It was also a bit daunting because neither NPAQ nor FIDO had a budget to engage professionals for this complex task that required expertise not readily available in our memberships. However through the generosity of experts who made *pro bono* contributions of their specialities, we produced and published the requisite EIS in February 2012. Then the project languished for more than 18 months waiting for a response to the EIS prepared with so much effort. A QPWS concern was maintenance. FIDO undertook to maintain the track for 5 years from completion.

Finally in December 2013, a \$25,000 Friends of Parks grant was provided to:

1. Repair the Lake Allom barracks to make them secure and weatherproof.
2. Do groundwork to clear around the Lake Allom barracks.
3. Reopen the tracks north and south of Lake Allom as outlined in the Environmental Impact Statement for the George Haddock Track.
4. Acquire plant and equipment to assist in reopening and maintaining these walking track sections.

That Stage of the work was completed in October 2014.

Further stages involving the construction of shelters and further track work can't commence. Although both NPAQ and FIDO are keen to finish the project, neither organization has a budget to buy the construction material and to cover other expenses. Grants are needed to help carry out future work but without approval neither group is eligible to apply for the grants.

The George Haddock Track traverses some of K'Gari's most spectacular scenery and it is walkable all year round. It is not subject to flooding and for 80% of its course, it uses former roads now closed to vehicular traffic. FIDO and NPAQ are pursuing it because it represents a major change in the patterns of recreation to offer more sustainable tourism.

Comparisons

| Three Capes Track | George Haddock Track |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 46 kms in length | 52 kms in length |
| built to a dry-boot standard | built to a dry-boot standard |
| Luxury huts accommodate 48 | Basic shelters to sleep 16 |
| Three huts | Four shelters |
| \$25,300,000 from government | \$25,000 from government |
| Walking season 6 months | Walking season 12 months |
| \$500 for 4 days and 3 nights | \$5.94 per night camping fee |

Tasmania and the Three Capes Track

Tasmania is renowned for its magnificent bushwalking opportunities covering a diverse array of environments, from ancient rainforests and empty, white-sand beaches to inspiring overnight walks through Australia's most mountainous landscapes. The most famous walk, the 65 kilometre Overland Track has generated a major industry even though it is barely used between May and October. It has set such a model for generating tourism interest in Tasmania even from those who don't plan to do this challenging through-walk themselves that the State Government has been keen to develop other walks to draw more visitors to the state.

Tasmania is very focussed on ecotourism. As a result six Tasmanian businesses won top honours at the Australian Tourism Awards ceremony in February. That isn't enough for the Tasmanian Government. Last November Tasmania opened a newly completed \$25.3M 46km Three Capes Walking Track on the Tasman Peninsula. The Commonwealth Government and private enterprise made significant contributions to Stage 1. Despite this huge investment, this small state government is determined to press on with a third stage to build a Cape Raoul leg of the track. That is estimated to cost another \$25M.

Tasmania regards these developments as part of the State infrastructure because that small state can see the flow on benefits from so many of its ecotourism ventures at first hand.

Stage 1 of the Three Capes Track stretches for just 46 kms taking in Cape Pillar and Cape Hauy on the Tasman Peninsula. It takes in tall eucalypt forests, coastal heath and Australia's highest sea cliffs. Evenings are spent in one of the three warm and comfortable environmentally-sensitive cabins strategically placed along the track. Each caters for 48 people, with cooking equipment, showers, toilets, yoga mats and mobile-phone charging stations. The cost to walk the track \$495 for adults and \$396 for children. Despite this cost for a four day three night experience people were queueing up to undertake the walk with 2000 booked up at the time of opening. Due to the Tasmanian climate the track won't be open all year.



Getting people to see Fraser Island (K'Gari) by means other than 4WD means significant changes to the existing patterns of recreation.

News in Brief

Each month a plethora of issues of relevance to Fraser Island come across the FIDO desk. As well as conservation matters, we need to keep abreast of a range of issues from tourism trends, medical evacuations, and activities in the environs of Fraser Island that have implications for it. This page is a sample

Earthquakes: In late July 2015 an earthquake 100 kms east of Indian Head was felt as far away at the Gold Coast. Since that time there have been more than a dozen after shocks emanating from the same general area up to Boxing Day. None though were quite as strong as the initial 5.4 magnitude quake. It makes this the most seismically active area of Queensland in 2015.

Inskip instability: International headlines were made in October when an underwater landslide at Inskip Point, Queensland's most popular camping area, swallowed up a 4WD and caravan. It was initially labeled a "sinkhole", but in reality it is like the outside bend in a river as the water flows into and out of Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Bay four times a day progressively cutting into Inskip Point.

Ocean cruise to call at Kingfisher: FIDO will be monitoring the impact of the inclusion of Fraser Island in the itineraries of two cruises (April and December) in 2016. FIDO doesn't anticipate a big impact from these stopovers. The limited time ashore won't allow passengers to explore much of Fraser Island. It is doubtful if any will get beyond Lake McKenzie. It is possible that many passengers may opt not to leave the ships. FIDO will be monitoring the situation.



These stumps emerging from K'Gari's western beach are *Syncarpia hillii*. The same properties that made them valuable as piles have helped preserve them in this marine environment. They are remnants of a rainforest that grew here at least 5,000 years ago. The high white beach cliffs nearby display the A horizon of what have been assessed as the deepest podzol soils on Earth. These are part of K'Gari's Outstanding Universal Value.

Irukandji: A cluster of six Irukandji stings was recorded at Fraser Island in December. A marine researcher says the dangerous Irukandji jellyfish will become common-place on southern Queensland beaches within a decade as water temperatures rise and the stingers drift further south. The term "Irukandji" represents a group of species rather than a specific species of stinging jellyfish. Irukandji include the Morbakka jellyfish that is native to Moreton Bay and the stings of which can induce Irukandji Syndrome. Irukandji syndrome can cause nausea, anxiety, headache, waves of

spasms in the back and stomach, dizziness and difficulty in breathing.

Research: The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) has begun to deploy a sensor network in forested areas of Fraser Island. The sensors will be used to "measure sap flow in trees, soil moisture, temperature, humidity" and other variables in sub-tropical forest environments. The sensors will facilitate research and reduce the need for researchers to embark on the six-hour plus trip to Fraser Island from the university's mainland campus to obtain the data.

Biological control aims to save K'Gari's Pandanus: Over recent years the pandanus on Fraser Island, particularly along the east coast have been decimated by the advent of a plant-hopper insect *Jamella australiae*. The *Jamella* builds up populations but while it sucks the pandanus sap they don't directly kill the trees. That is done by a range of fungi and other biota that feed on the exudate left by the *Jamella* on the leaves. These secondary impacts eventually overwhelm the Pandanus.

Jamella exists in Northern Queensland where it doesn't kill pandanus because there it is kept in check by a parasitic wasp *Aphanomerus pusillus*. It is the size of a small sand grain. In recent months supported and encouraged by FIDO and a number of other Fraser Island stakeholders the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has released those diminutive predators on K'Gari. They have been successful in controlling *Jamella* in other parts of South East Queensland and we hope that in time they will limit the devastating impact of *Jamella* on K'Gari.

Time and Tides: Two impacts of climate change are becoming more apparent on K'Gari. While the sea level rise so far has not been great, the changing water temperatures are affecting currents in the semi-enclosed and relatively shallow waters of Hervey Bay. The results can be observed in the extent of the erosion along K'Gari's western shores north of Moon Point (which is now an island). FIDO's observations suggest that there has been a significant increase in the number of days that the wind blows from the North-west. The western shore is much more prone to erosion when the wind is from the North-west. Certainly there is much more coastal erosion on K'Gari's western shores than along K'Gari's surfing beach where the currents are less variable.

Cash For Containers: In Australia, 30 million bottles and cans are landfilled or littered every day. That's 21,000 every minute. Queenslanders use over 1.6 billion bottles and cans every year. According to the National Litter Index, Queensland has the highest litter incidence in Australia with 72 items per 1000 square metres, 41% higher than the national average, making it the most littered state in Australia. 85% of Queenslanders support a cash-for-containers scheme. If such a scheme were introduced in Queensland, as many as 500 new jobs could be created in recycling and collection and councils would have the opportunity to redeem deposits. Litter on K'Gari is a problem that can't be ignored. K'Gari would benefit if Queensland had a scheme similar to South Australia where over 80% of containers are returned to redeem the deposits.