

FIDO's K'Gari E-News No 6 (22nd April, 2016)

A further interim update by the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation between MOONBI 133 and 134

7th Biennial Fraser Island Conference: Our shorthand title for the 7th Conference marking 25 years of World Heritage listing is **"T,T&T"**. The conference poster was developed and designed by Mike Oram. FIDO wants these posters distributed far and wide to attract the best contributions to our conference. Conference posters can be sent electronically or by mail on request. The T,T&T conference will be held at the University of the Sunshine Coast on 16th August 2017. This will be an important event not to be missed by anyone seriously interested in what there is to know about K'Gari.

Keynote Speaker Dr Martin Buzacott is a broadcaster, historian and writer with a long connection with K'Gari's sister sandmass, Cooloola

Call for Papers Date Claimer

7th Biennial Great Sandy Conference



Fraser Island -

Time: 25 years since Fraser Island's World Heritage inscription

Tide: Trends influencing the island and surrounding sea environments

Tourism: Analysis of benefits and impacts from about 400,000 visitors annually

Wednesday, 16th August 2017, 9.00am to 5.00pm

at Innovation Centre, Sippy Downs

University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland

(PLEASE PUT THE DATE AND VENUE IN YOUR CALENDAR NOW!)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Writer and Broadcaster, Dr Martin Buzacott

The theme allows wide scope to discuss geomorphology, the marine environment and the impacts of climate change as well as the island's biodiversity. It allows scope to discuss the natural beauty of the site which is one of the three World Heritage criteria that Fraser Island has met.

Anyone wishing to make a conference presentation should contact conference@fido.org.au to nominate their topic.

As the conference program develops details will be posted at www.fido.org.au

Organised by: Fraser Island Defenders Organisation.
FIDO: The Watchdog of Fraser Island
Supported by: University of the Sunshine Coast &
Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance



Fraser Island Transport Study: An impasse developed over FIDO's proposal to fund a feasibility Study into a light rail proposal for Fraser Island. The QPWS didn't want this study and saw four major impediments to them supporting such a study. At a meeting with Environment Minister Steven Miles on 11th April there was agreement that the environmental impact of road down-cutting needs to be addressed with some urgency. The agreed outcome was that FIDO will undertake a study into transport options for Fraser Island (K'Gari) to reduce the current environmental impact of visitation. FIDO will be seeking to revive a study commissioned in 2000 by the QPWS but drawn to a premature halt in 2002 as it was nearing a critical conclusion but it has significant data on the state of the roads then that have worsened in the 15 years since. FIDO is still to receive money from the Barbara Winkley bequest but it is hoped to commission consultants within months.

In 2002 a GHD study on Fraser Island (K'Gari) found:

Moderate severity smothering 6% of road network;

Moderate downcutting 7% of road network

High severity siltation 8 sites

Cultural heritage site 1 site impacted by roads

High severity smothering 1% of road network

Severe downcutting 2% of road network

Moderate severity siltation 12 sites

These are clearly unacceptable impacts in a World Heritage site but they confirmed what had been the observations of long-time Fraser Island users in the major causes for the accelerating depreciations of the roads.

Green Army on K'Gari: The first 9-man Green Army team is currently working in Fraser Island World Heritage area. It includes three young Butchulla men. There have been delays in work on the projects nominated in FIDO's application. This is because of bureaucratic delays in issuing "Approval for Residency". This meant that the team couldn't camp on the island which dramatically reduced their productivity. FIDO is hoping that there are no similar glitches when the second team sets out to deal with weeds and erosion in some very critical areas of K'Gari.

Nature Walk: Eurong is the most visited site on Fraser Island and it is appropriate to have some interpretation of the landscape and environment there where more people stop than at Eli Creek, Central Station or Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora). FIDO's new 450 metre long Nature Walk between Eurong's two valleys traces the path of a former small sandblow that over the last 40 years has become colonised by vegetation.

To interpret the natural values and the landscape, FIDO has installed 32 interpretive signs describing the relationship between the plant communities and soil development. The walk takes 10 to 20 minutes depending on the time taken to study the interpretation. It is very safe for children because it is inside the dingo fence that surrounds Eurong Village.

The walk demonstrates how Melaleucas can survive being buried by 15 metres of sand as is shown by some melaleucas that were then exhumed by the wind and are many hundreds and possibly thousands of years old.



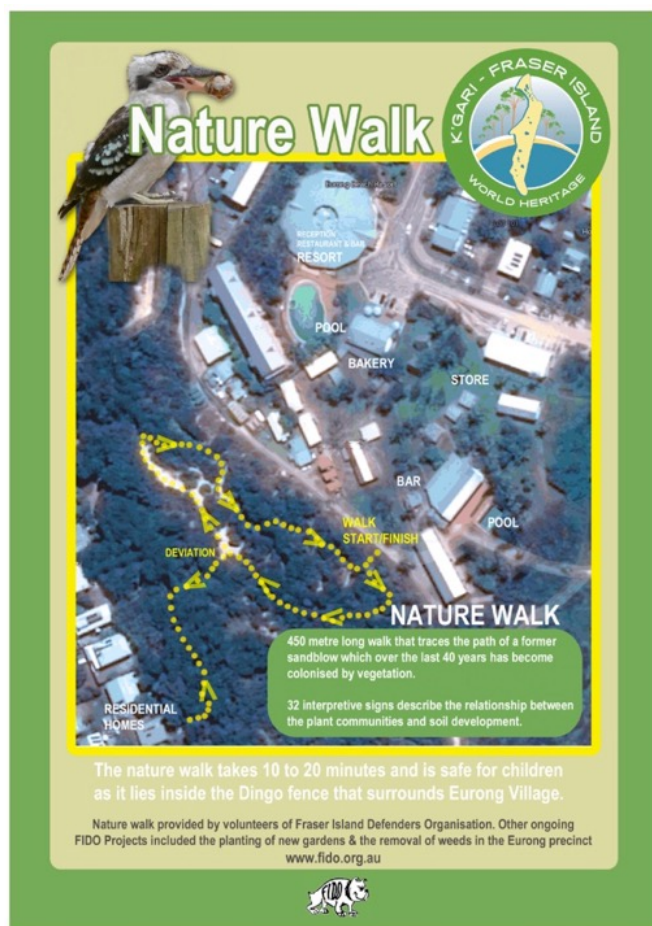
John Sinclair FIDO HPO and David Farrelly Manager of Eurong Resort (with scissors) open Eurong's new Nature Walk between the two valleys to enable K'Gari visitors get better understanding of the soils and vegetation processes on the world's greatest sand island.

FIDO Volunteers Help K'Gari

FIDO has a proud tradition as a volunteer organization. It has survived and thrived for more than 45 years without any paid staff. In E-News 6 we would like to focus on some of the significant projects accomplished by FIDO. So far in 2016 we have had three very productive working bees and are preparing for four more by December and possibly a Bio-Blitz to establish better baseline data.

Eurong: In February a 10 person team built the new Nature Walk, helped expand the capacity of the Eurong nursery in addition to eradicating weeds and transforming the village landscape to a more natural one. The next trip in July is already booked out but applications are being called for the October working bee. Read further details: <http://fido.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Bush-Regen-Working-Bee-Diary-Feb-2016.pdf>

One of the volunteers who worked on the track for the Nature Walk, Steve Griswold, is a retired highly qualified landscape engineer with a long career in the US Parks Service. A sequel to the February working bee that involved some Eurong residents was that Mike Oram went home and developed a poster describing the new Nature Walk. It was so impressive that Danny Sinclair of Benga Designs transformed it and donated three aluminium signs that now guide Eurong visitors to the start of the walk.



Happy Valley: Peter Shooter led a team in March to continue the battle against Abrus. This has led to learning so much more about this most aggressive weed that we are determined to eradicate from the only area on K'Gari where it exists. Volunteers are now carrying out seed viability trials that are crucial to this battle. In the meantime Peter is about to head over to the island again

in May but we are seeking volunteers for the planned working bees in September and November, 2016.

Battling Abrus is a bit like trying to eliminate trifids, but Peter and his hardy volunteers are slowly gaining on their aggressive enemy through quarterly follow-ups



Peter says of this photo: *This is a shot of a heavily infested area on Education Department land at Happy Valley in March before treatment. This is all regrowth since it was sprayed in November 2015. I believe this is all new seedlings. All the growth was on the ground or on small shrubs to 1 metre. None up in canopy. Canopy infestation was all destroyed in November.*

Weeding Volunteers sought: Peter Shooter and Maree Prior are seeking volunteers to work with them later this year:

- Happy Valley 4th to 10th September,
- Eurong 22nd to 29th October
- Happy Valley 6th to 12th November.

Details and Application Forms can be found at <http://fido.org.au/call-for-volunteers-to-work-on-kgari-second-half-2016/>

George Haddock Track: Over the 2016 Easter Weekend 16 volunteers helped honour FIDO's obligation to maintain the George Haddock Track.

The team cleared 17 kms of track of any fallen timber and major regrowth. During 2014 FIDO and NPAQ volunteers cleared 22.7 kms of walking-tracks along former logging tracks and roads in nine different sections of the overall 52 kilometre George Haddock Track supported by a Friends of Parks grant. No maintenance had been done since October 2013 except for a little clearing between Lake Coomboo and Hidden Lake since.

The swathe of cleared ground around the Harold Charles Barracks was greatly extended by stripping away regrowth and accumulated fallen debris. This provides a greater margin of safety for the critical infrastructure from potential fires. It also had the effect of creating a larger flat area for campers participating in future working bees.



All of the track clearing was done manually with a little assistance other than from battery operated chainsaws to deal with larger tree-falls across the track.

Increasing the Heat: While the autumn freshness has now kicked in for 2016 (quite belatedly) the political climate is hotting up as Australia prepares for a critical **Federal Election** on climate. The relief from the intense summer heat though should not let us forget, when we go to the elections probably within the next few months, the summer we have just experienced that cooked the corals of the Great Barrier Reef nor of other summers with elevated temperatures that await us. The impact on the Great Barrier Reef can be seen with bare eyes. The impacts on K'Gari are not yet as obvious. While FIDO wrestles with weeds and erosion of roads, issues that we can actually remediate, the larger threat to Fraser Island's natural integrity of Climate Change needs action from all levels of government both within and outside Australia. It needs Federal Government leadership.



In October 2005 a monster Easter Cassia harbouring many other weeds was the main feature as people approached Eurong from the west. This feature tree was a weed source that helped weeds to spread in Eurong. This area has now been transformed into a series of gardens that demonstrate native plants are more attractive and better substitutes for exotic plants that may become weeds on K'Gari.

A Bio-Blitz for Fraser Island

FIDO is currently proposing a weeklong Bio-Blitz for K'Gari. Again it will be reliant on volunteers

Beach to Boomanjin and Birrabeen

28th November to 4th December 2016

(proposed pending the appointment of a Coordinator)

FIDO has long advocated a Bio Blitz (or a series of biennial Bio-Blitzs) on Fraser Island (K'Gari) because while the island is inscribed on the World Heritage list for its biological as well as its geomorphological and aesthetic values, much more biological research is needed to know the extent of the natural resources there.

The *Beach to Boomanjin and Birrabeen Bio-Blitz* would be based at Dilli Village. It aims to have teams of entomologists, botanists, ornithologists, zoologists, herpetologists and other specialist groups (fishes, fungi, etc) scouring the study area. Each team would develop their own programs and modus operandi. It is expected that the team leader would be responsible for compiling a report of the findings of the team adding to existing data banks and that being built at the USC.

FIDO is seeking to appoint a coordinator before this project can proceed. The Coordinator will seek to recruit specialist scientists from a range of disciplines to research the study of the defined research area that covers a diversity of habitats to develop an inventory of the natural resources and species within the area. FIDO would also recruit volunteers as necessary to assist scientists and specialists logistically.

The study area includes samples of all six dune systems with Dune System 4 east of Lake Birrabeen and Dune Systems 5 and 6 in the vicinity of the Boomanjin airstrip as well as three large perched dune lakes, two creeks and a number of old swamps as well as various forest types. It will be a broad transect of a wide range of ecotypes from the beach through the foredunes and the freshwater aquatic environments of Govi and Gerrawea Creeks. It would enable the comparisons by sampling mined and unmined areas in both the foredune and hind dune areas. It would include the large peat swamp that has the flarks and fens never studied in detail previously.

Dilli Village has accommodation for up to 60 people. This complex as well as a large camping area, also has 24 hour 240V power that may be needed for some equipment. It also has a large meeting area. There would be opportunities at Dilli Village each night for the various teams to compare notes and share observations of their field work.

