

Fraser Island Defenders Organisation

President's Annual Report — August 2014

2013/14 has seen some significant progress on Fraser Island with work beginning on the George Haddock extension to the Great Walk. Much has been achieved in the eradication of weeds in Eurong and Happy Valley. However it has been a year of great concern about the present State and Federal Governments' lack of concern for the environment and watering down of important protections, for example the recent rescinding of the Wild Rivers legislation. This combined with the recent amendments to the Cardinal Principle of the Nature Conservation Act exposes Fraser Island to exploitation of its freshwater resources. Some of the same areas of concern for Fraser Island as the previous year continue with the monitoring of the movement of sand, the monitoring of water quality in the lakes, the management of dingoes, the continuing management of weeds, and World Heritage listing for Cooloola.

It is unfortunate not to have support or interest from the Queensland Government at a political level. The Minister for National Parks has yet to agree to meet FIDO after more than two years in his portfolio. During this time there has been an unprecedented winding back of environmental protection throughout the state. The decision not to renominate Fraser Island and Cooloola to recognize a wider area and additional values epitomises the Newman Government's contempt for appreciation of outstanding natural environments. Regrettably, judging by the defunding of the voluntary conservation movement, the Federal Government seems just as indifferent to protecting the environment as the Queensland Government.

Our concerns with the Newman government's splitting of National Parks out of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and putting it with the Department of Recreation, Sport and Racing continues and with the recent rescinding of the Wild Rivers legislation, our concerns about the threat to the water in the creeks on Fraser island have re-emerged. With the threats to national and marine parks through degazettal or reduction of status and the building of mega ports and the announcement that mining on North Stradbroke will be extended beyond the agreed date, we remain alarmed and wary. It seems that the proposed extension of The Great Sandy World Heritage is also on the government's backburner. The suggestions that the EPBC Act and Federal supervision of environmental concerns is to be moved to the states is also alarming news. This is a time for the watchdog to be busy.

In 2013/14 the volunteer programme with the NPAQ to honour George Haddock by extending the Great Walk to Arch Cliffs with dingo proof huts and toilets at four camp sites and access to many wonderful lakes has progressed. So far this year volunteers have contributed 945 hours on the ground on Fraser Island as well as countless volunteer hours organizing for these working bees. The barracks at Lake Allom have now been renovated and painted. The tractor and generator sheds have been reroofed and a tractor and other equipment purchased. 27 kms are now cleared but much more work is required on the remaining 25 kms. We thank all those who have given their time, enthusiasm and expertise to these tasks and especially the leader and organiser, John Sinclair. There is at present a concern about our ability to continue this project as no approval has been received to proceed further than Stage 1 of the project. Hopefully this issue will be soon resolved. The construction of the track stretches NPAQ's and FIDO's resources but funding sources will continue to be pursued. We hope this 52 km extension to the Great Walk will help change recreational patterns on Fraser Island.

Weeds are a continuing issue for the organisation. FIDO continues its on-going weeding programme in Eurong and Happy Valley. While we are almost on top of the problem in Eurong, Happy Valley remains a huge challenge. FIDO has again worked with FINIA in determining priorities and received funding from the Burnett Mary Regional Group to carry out weeding programmes in the last financial year. John Sinclair and his volunteers ran **three** weeding bees and much has been achieved in replacing exotic gardens with display native gardens at Eurong and with the development of the nursery of native plants contributing more than **725** volunteer hours. Already in 2014 we are on track to more than double the number of hours contributed. Already this year, FIDO has staged three working bees with another three scheduled before December. The doubling of effort has been possible because Peter Shooter is now leading teams working in Happy Valley on Abrus, a particularly aggressive weed that FIDO believes needs priority treatment. The other factor is that we are now drawing so many applications from volunteers wanting to work on our weeding projects that it now exceeds our capacity to accept all of the offers.

FIDO is well advanced in its project to develop a logo to promote the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Fraser Island as a World Heritage site. The logo focuses on the underlying key to understanding Fraser Island, the soil profiles.

During 2013/14 the major achievements of FIDO have been achieved through many collaborations. These have involved collaborations with the QPWS (the George Haddock Track and weeding projects), the NPAQ and other organizations supporting the building of the George Haddock Track, the Fraser Coast Regional Council, the Kingfisher Group, particularly the Eurong resort, and the residents and landholders of Fraser Island who are providing ever increasing cooperation in helping to manage weeds. Our collaboration with the University of the Sunshine Coast extends much further than just their supporting us by providing a venue for next year's conference titled "Fraser Island --Sand, Sea and Sun". It is being planned for 12 August 2015. We extend our thanks to them for their ongoing support. FIDO continues to play a key role in the Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance (FINIA) that has helped facilitate closer cooperation on mutual objectives.

While there was much controversy over dingo management in recent years, it is pleasing to see increasing acceptance of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy that FIDO has always supported. Unfortunately though, the dismantling of DERM has had few other benefits for Fraser Island. The splitting of Fraser Island responsibilities between two Ministers has reduced the effectiveness of the advisory committees. There is now even less communication about management of the island than before. FIDO is still concerned about a program to rehabilitate and better manage Indian Head that continues to degrade while nothing is being done and decision making is paralysed.

This year the publication of "Moonbi" and the production of educational Backgrounders continued. Thanks go to John Sinclair our Project Officer.

FIDO's continuing concerns for the protection of Fraser Island fall under six main headings:

- (1) unsustainable levels of visitation using the existing infrastructure, and the associated need for a light rail system;
- (2) the failure to adequately protect the Great Sandy marine resources,
- (3) continuing adverse environmental impacts as a result of current fire management practices,
- (4) recognition that climate change will have a greater impact on the natural integrity of Fraser Island that tourism, timber extraction and sandmining combined
- (5) developing alternative more sustainable (and safer) patterns of recreation.
- (6) promoting Fraser Island's Outstanding Universal Value and helping the island gain the recognition

and management that it deserves as one of the World's great natural wonders. claims to become the National Laboratory for Climate Change research, as proposed by Prof. Bruce Thom at our 2009 conference.

I want to thank our office bearers, John Sinclair (Project officer and Secretary), Jane Enchelmaier (Treasurer), Terry Hampson, John C Sinclair, John Davey and Saren Starbridge (Vice Presidents) and Peter Shooter as well as our growing army of volunteers. We also need to thank Su Dawson not only for her work as a volunteer in the field but for organizing the catering for the increased number of working bees. Congratulations go too to John Sinclair for his Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) award, truly well deserved.

The need to protect wild places is ever greater with the present political climate and with the growth of population and the pressures this brings to places like Fraser Island makes the FIDO's work more challenging.

**Colleen Enchelmaier
President**

<p>Office Bearers Fraser Island Defenders Organisation 2013-14 and 2014-15</p> <p>President Colleen Enchelmaier</p> <p>Hon Secretary and Honorary Project Officer John Sinclair (Snr)</p> <p>Treasurer: Jane Enchelmaier</p> <p>Vice Presidents Terry Hampson John C Sinclair John Davey and Saren Starbridge</p>
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