



MOONBI 108

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, **PO Box 70, BALD HILLS QLD 4036**

FIDO, "*The Watchdog of Fraser Island*", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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Since MOONBI 107

Since April, when MOONBI 107 went to press many events with potentially long term implications for the future of Fraser Island have occurred. FIDO has been so intimately involved with these that our plans to produce this issue of MOONBI before the Fraser Island 20-20 Noosa Conference had to be deferred. This issue is now four months late.

On the State political scene, after only a few months in the job, John Mickel moved on from being Environment Minister to looking after Queensland's energy requirements. He was replaced by Desley Boyle whose portfolio also includes Local Government. This means that one of the most urgent priorities for Fraser Island and a firm pledge by Premier Beattie back in 2001 to bring the management of Fraser Island under a single authority is now more probable than it was during the previous Beattie Government.

On the Federal scene, Senator Ian Campbell from Western Australia was appointed to replace the retiring David Kemp. That wasn't before Minister Kemp and Primary Industries (and local MP) Warren Truss had belatedly promised some Federal funds for Fraser Island. Mind you, it wasn't for any of the priorities which had been identified by the CAC which the Feds helped set up and fund. At least a nominal amount of money was promised to Fraser Island just before the Federal Election.

There have been many other positive happenings:

1. The Scientific Advisory Committee held a one day **Colloquium at Gatton College** which enabled academics and others engaged in research on Fraser Island to report back and to have some interdisciplinary discussions. It was a great success. There is now much more emphasis given to research as a basis for decision making on Fraser Island.
2. FIDO's Fraser Island **20-20 Conference** held at Noosa on 19th August was an astonishing success and revealed a whole new base of data about Fraser Island which had never been anticipated. (See Story * 2)
3. At FIDO's 2020 Conference the paper by Associate Professor Ron Boyd of the University of Newcastle excited great interest. Ron has been studying the offshore sea bed around Sandy Cape and Breaksea Spit. The offshore imaging work he has done using the most sophisticated equipment shows that the impressive geomorphological features of Fraser Island are at least matched by the features below sea level. The submarine dunes caused by wave action are both higher and steeper than those above sea-level. The submarine canyons where vast volumes of sand [which he tracked back to the Blue Mountains] falls over the edge of the continental shelf are really dazzling. The new data justifies extending the World Heritage area.

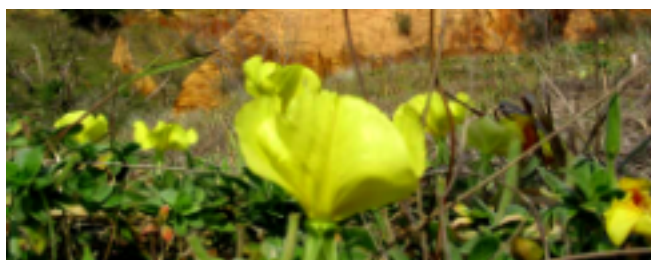
4. More than six years after the workshop to reassess the World Heritage values of both Fraser Island and Coolooloola, the QPWS has finally published the outcomes. Such an outstanding list of values should see the Great Sandy Region region nominated.
5. Fraser Island's Great Walk which FIDO trusts is stage I of the Kgari Trail opened in June. (Story * 8)
6. **Light Rail back on the rails:** After a categorical rejection of light rail as an option for Fraser Island [based on a spurious assumption that it would cost \$220 million to build the 22 kilometres of track on Fraser Island], there have at last been some positive advances towards establishing a much more sustainable light rail system on Fraser Island. (See story *2)

FIDO has published its proposal for a light rail to link the Kingfisher and Eurong Resorts. This is a public document which is now the basis of further enquiries and discussions. In this issue, there is also a background showing why the existing transport and access system is already suffering under the current volume of traffic. It will be further stressed just by the normal exponential growth in visitor numbers.

On the less positive side, while nothing is being done to change the transport and access system, one tonne of sand is being relocated downhill for every visitor to Fraser Island travelling by 4WD (e.i. a million tonnes every three years). Dingoes continue to be shot at the rate of almost one a month as part of the current Dingo Management Strategy. This is while the research shows that Fraser Island remains the most globally significant location of dingoes in the world and they are now being classified as "Endangered".

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FIDO Initiatives Bearing Fruit

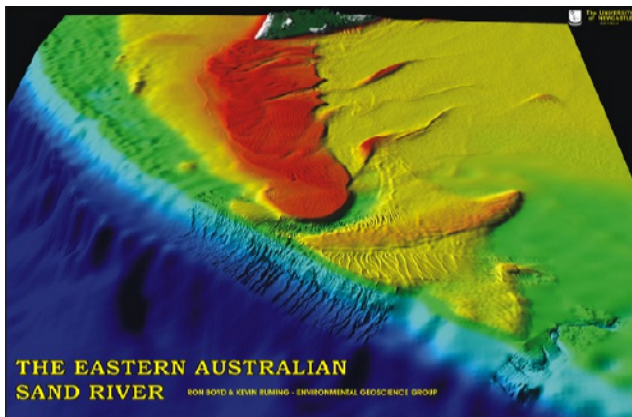
The initiative of the new FIDO team to conduct the ambitious Fraser Island 20-20 Conference at Noosa in August has been well rewarded. The conference revealed a lot of new information and put it in the public arena for the first time. It was also a catalyst to initiate some encouraging action on FIDO's long stalled light rail proposal. It set a benchmark of excellence for organization of which FIDO can be justly proud. FIDO is already looking towards collaborating with the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee to organize the next conference in 2006.

2020 Vision for Fraser Island

Although initial registrations were light and forced the conference to be reduced from two days to one, 60 people attended in a very congenial setting of the Noosa Lakes resort, virtually on the doorstep of the Great Sandy Region.

Dr Geoff Mosley's keynote address urged that the full Great Sandy Region be nominated for World Heritage Listing. Geoff's paper is posted on FIDO's web site along with a paper by John Sinclair and other speakers.

The imaginative thoughts on the World Heritage theme were inspired though when Prof Ron Boyd from the University of Newcastle presented his paper revealing the fascinating contours of the seabed surrounding Sandy Cape and Breaksea Spit. His studies reveal that the wave formed dunes and marine rivers of sand below sea-level around Breaksea Spit are at least as geomorphologically interesting as the wind-formed dunes above sea level. Such formations have not been identified on this scale anywhere else and justify the inclusion of a much larger off-shore area in the inscribed World Heritage site.

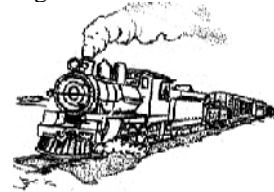


The image (which can be seen in colour on the internet) shows a view of the seabed north of Fraser Island looking towards the south. The triangle at the top is Fraser Island and is the only part of the image above sea level. The remainder of the image is colour coded for water depth. Reds are less than 20m deep, yellow 20-40 m and greens and blues progressively deeper to over 1500 m. The image shows a 30 km long tongue of sand (Breaksea Spit) progressing north from Fraser Island until it meets the edge of the continental shelf. Here the strong tidal currents coming out of Hervey Bay to the right make giant dunes on the seabed and dump the sand over the edge of the shelf. At that point, the sand is funnelled down 30 "rivers" or submarine gullies to the seabed in 4000 m of water. Near the bottom right is a small coral reef sticking out of the seabed and being covered by the sand coming north from Fraser Island.

Ron Boyd's was just one of the wonderful papers so professionally presented by well informed speakers. Other papers dealt with a range of issues and how there were many approaches to Fraser Island. The University of the Sunshine Coast explained their initiatives in taking over Dilli Village and establishing a Research Station at

Kingfisher Resort to attract researchers and students from around the world to add to our growing body of knowledge. There were papers outlining initiatives of the tourist industry and papers from the Hervey Bay City Council which provided more information about their administration of the island. In all, the exchange of information was most useful and will help not only FIDO but other conference participants to review their approach to the management of Fraser Island. In this respect, the most seminal paper was from David Jehan from EDI Rail who presented a study showing that light rail had been developed in a number of natural areas including Kosciusko National Park, South Western Tasmania and Rottnest Island as effective people movers to reduce environmental impacts.

The success of both the SAC Colloquium and FIDO's conference which occurred within a month of each other has resulted in an "in principle" resolution to join forces to hold a combined event in 2006 to review the developments in scientific knowledge and management which may relate to the Great Sandy Region.



Light Rail back on the rails:

As referred to above the paper on light rail presented by David Jehan has excited many people to explore more on the possibilities of light rail as a major people mover on Fraser Island. FIDO also tabled its light rail proposal backgrounder. The new interest inspired a meeting of Queensland Tourism & Leisure, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and FIDO in Brisbane to clarify some of the issues relating to possible options for a light rail on Fraser Island. The meeting occurred on 21st October. It was assisted by two engineers who helped explain some more technical issues which need to be clarified before any clear decisions can be made (still some time away). Some issues which have been clarified include:

- Potentially the most viable route for a light rail on Fraser Island would link Kingfisher and Eurong Resorts, and include both Lake McKenzie and Central Station;
- The route would be probably about 22 kilometre long and if it was built using the same gauge as cane trains, the line would cost about \$7million excluding the cost of any bridgeworks. (This assessment is without having carried out any on ground surveys or assessments).
- Using the cane gauge lines, the cost of rolling stock could be slightly less than \$3 million.
- If a line is built, it would have to be under the ownership of the QPWS.

All parties are interested in the proposal but before further progress can be made, further specifications need to be refined including details of the volume of passengers and freight which may use such a line. However, the issue is now under more active investigation.