



MOONBI 118

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

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Since MOONBI 117

Preparing a MOONBI when there is little positive to report is incredibly depressing. Some idea of how depressing it is can be gained by examining the Issues report prepared by FIDO and included in MOONBI 106 published in November, 2003 (see on pp 2-3) and the lack of progress on any of these issues in the intervening five years.

Worse we discover that the Environmental Protection Agency has been so neglectful in its management of this wonderful island that FIDO devoted almost 40 years fighting for that they haven't even bothered to have the water quality in the Fraser Island lakes monitored since 1997. This arrogant casualness to the future of Fraser Island and its outstanding values defies any explanation except for incompetence and/or indifference by the managers.

The EPA is prepared to consider closing Basin Lake to all public access without even bothering to establish some clear baseline data. When it comes to other matters listed on the table the situation is almost as demoralizing. The negativity is best described by the progress report on the 2003 Issues table that is featured on pp 4-5.

Traveston Crossing Dam: The imminence of the 2009 Queensland election has paralyzed political decision making in Queensland except for decisions to help political survival. One of those decisions was to shelve the Traveston Crossing Dam until at least after the election and then reasonably forever. Its environmental impacts (including on Great Sandy Strait) are very adverse. Despite the Premier's assurances the issue is as yet far from dead because Queensland's water future is still firmly in the hands of the Dam Builders who lack lateral thinking and are still obsessed with what they have to do to go ahead with the Traveston Crossing Dam rather than looking at alternatives without the horrific environmental impacts of this hair brained scheme. At least the politicians are now starting to question the wisdom of proceeding at all.

Public Safety: While the QPW's obsession with safety is commendable in part, it is over the top in many areas including the irrational tree felling and wide firebreaks. In some in other areas, especially involving motor vehicles, it is completely lacking. FIDO draws attention the knee jerk reaction to address the dingo threat (see story p9) while ignoring the ever-growing number of other casualties from situations that shouldn't have arisen. While QPW continues to go over the top with firebreaks it is allowing a potentially catastrophic fuel load to accumulate throughout the island. The QWP needs to be more accountable for its management of Fraser Island. Its failings include not monitoring the water quality in the lakes for the 12 years

FIDO in the Age of IT

MOONBI has been FIDO's main communication vehicle for 38 years and it continues to be important. However with the age of IT there are more expedient ways to report issues to both members and a wider audience. FIDO's web site continues to attract an ever-increasing audience. Therefore some things such as the report of our inspections in October are now placed directly on our web site and while they are topical and may not be published also in MOONBI.

FIDO is also keen to use its technology to also communicate more directly to members. To do this we need to have Email addresses. We want to be very discriminating in what and how we send out information and to avoid it being treated like spam. If you would like to be kept more abreast of Fraser Island issues and to receive notification of our Christmas Party or working bees then you will need to register your Email address with us.

Forthcoming events:

FIDO has two significant events to which members and interested public are invited. These are our conference on Friday 24th July at Walkabout Creek Conference Centre at Brisbane's

The other event is the illustrated public lecture "Great Sandy Region: a Natural Wonder of the World". This will be given by John Sinclair at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 3 February 2009 at the Royal Geographical Society's premises – 237 Milton Road, Milton as part of a lecture series to mark Queensland's sesqui-centenary. See more details of both events on p10 and www.fido.org.au

FIDO is an entirely voluntary organization. It has no professional staff. All work on its behalf is done in an honorary capacity. However, FIDO needs financial support to meet necessary expenses to deal with the major issues and projects, and to pursue research and campaigns to improve Fraser Island management.

Backgrounder: The backgrounder for this issue deals with the same issues examined quite independently by an Israeli geomorphologist, Noam Levin. It compares aerial photos decades apart showing the rate of sandblow disappearance.

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2003 — Progress Report on Fraser Island management issues

This table outlining some of the most critical issues for Fraser Island for the sustainability of its World Heritage values was first published in MOONBI 103 in November 2003. There has been negligible progress since. FIDO regards this as a measure of the continuing neglect by the Beattie and Bligh Governments

Subject	Issues	Progress as at 1 November 2003
1. Degradation of Lakes		
Allom	Two alluvial plumes are pouring sediments into Lake Allom — one on the southern side where an old road ran down to the lake and a newer one adjacent to the viewing platform. The lake may be filled with sediment within 100 years. As well the water level is being unnaturally lowered through pumping from the lake. This has broken the equilibrium between precipitation and evaporation.	An attempt made to curb the southern plume in 1996 failed to work because no maintenance was done. The EPA then ignored our urgent alert regarding the rapidly growing plume adjacent to the viewing platform for almost two years.
Allom	The lake is becoming eutrofied. The lake now has a green tint and nutrients are irremovable. Sediment from road wash may be adding nutrients. People feeding turtles are also adding nutrients.	Action is required to stop turtle feeding. Belated action has recently been taken to try to stop all sediment flow.
Boomanjin	The silt continues to flow from car park into lake basin.	This is an echo of the Lake Allom story.
Boomanjin	Rangers still drive rather than walk from car park to pump despite assurances that the practice had long ceased.	Why should any vehicles be driven on the lake shore and why pump from the lake?
Boomanjin	The fence at the camp-ground continues to visually offend.	There are no plans to modify the fence.
Birrabeen	Buses drive beside Lake Jennings and along the Lake Birrabeen beach have heavy environmental and social impacts. A parking area on the beach results in sump oil dripping there. Woodchips flow into the lake and the noise of the buses sound like an approaching Panzer Division shattering the serenity of the lake for all others.	The EPA claims to be awaiting the outcome of the long stalled and overdue Transport and Access Study but has plans only to shift the bus parking area a little further back from the Lake Birrabeen beach and still impact on Lake Jennings
McKenzie	Sediment is flowing into Lake McKenzie from a nearby road forming a significant alluvial plume in the lake. The detritus includes a large volume of woodchip washed off the road.	After ineffective and half-hearted attempts to stop the flow since 1996 in mid 2003 another more serious attempt has been undertaken.
McKenzie	The swale below the day-use area and camping ground has accumulated more than a metre of alluvium washed down the slope.	There is still no monitoring of the rate and impact of this relocation of sand.
McKenzie	The camp-ground is to be closed and redeveloped as a day use area in from December 2003.	Initial EPA planning failed to take account of the wash filling the swale.
McKenzie	Buses are allowed to use a road to access the lake closed to all others	Objections to this have been over-ruled.
Boomerang	The highest perched dune lake in the world is being filled with silt.	No action has been taken.
2. Roads, Transport and Access		
Wanggoolba Creek	Heavy vehicles travelling on the side cutting above the creek are destabilizing the bank resulting in major land slip along. Wash from the road is affecting riparian vegetation. Most large trees between the road and the creek have visible leans indicating the road destabilization of the banks. Vehicle noise is disturbing the aesthetics of this Fraser Island icon.	The Environmental Protection Agency continues to ignore the warning signs and refuses to install any monitoring of these impacts. It takes its most heavily loaded trucks along this road and allows other heavy vehicles to continue to use it.
Awinya – Woralie Road	This was closed under the 1994 Management Plan. It was closed but reopened in 1997 by Ministerial decree. It remains open intruding on the wilderness value of this part of the island.	The road carries little traffic and intersects one of the few true wilderness areas in all of south east Queensland.
Hook Point to Dilli Village	This road was promised to be opened so that the beach could be closed. This would create a significant vehicle free beach.	The EPA is currently evaluating how it will proceed to implement this promise.
Transport and Access Study	For years the EPA have deferred taking the hard decisions to address the environmental and economic impacts resulting from 4WD use of Fraser Island's "roads" pending completion of this study. GH&D were commissioned to undertake it.	Having stalled for so many years to start the study the study has not proceeded in 2003 to completion for reasons best known to the EPA.
Light Rail	FIDO has been calling for a light rail on Fraser Island since 1974. There is a consensus that this is desirable to provide a more sustainable form of transport on the island while minimizing environmental impacts and providing a more comfortable more efficient people mover.	FIDO has commissioned two studies into preliminary feasibility which provided positive prospects, the Queensland Government has deferred any further initiative until the completion of the Transport and Access Study
Trail Bikes	Under the Management Plan only 4WDs are allowed on Fraser Island. Trail bikes are noisy, intrusive and have a long history of ignoring no-go areas.	We are waiting for the EPA to bite the bit and stop Trail bikes accessing the island
Aircraft	There are major issues of public safety with aircraft making an increasing number of landings on a beach used by an increasing number of motor vehicles and visitors as well as the increasing impact of noise with aircraft over-flying major Island icons.	The EPA has steadfastly refused to address this issue or even charge access fees for aircraft using Fraser Island for commercial purposes.

Subject	Issues	Progress as at 1 November 2003
3. Land Titles and Planning		
Moon Point	FIDO has advocated acquisition of freehold in-holdings since 1973. The Government’s failure to respond resulted in the Orchid Beach debacle and Kingfisher Resort. FIDO successfully opposed any subdivision of a 300 ha block at Moon Point.	Despite repeated representations over three decades have not yet got a Queensland Government to acquire this land for National Park purposes.
Kgari Trail	FIDO has advocated the establishment of a long distance walking trail from Sandy Cape to Hook Point to be known as the “Kgari Trail” since 1976. It has the potential to be the most popular walking trail in Australia worth millions of dollars.	A great walk is being developed from Dilli Village to lake Garrawongera. There is no provision to complete the full Kgari Trail
Single authority	The island is split between two local authorities which have different standards and both areas are given very low priority by Maryborough and Hervey Bay City Council. FIDO has argued since 1974 that the island be brought under a single authority.	The Beattie Government was elected in 2001 with a commitment to establish a single authority and give statutory base to the Management Plan. See p 1
Planning Controls	The Queensland Government developed draft DCPs for the Fraser Island sections of both Hervey Bay and Maryborough City Councils which would be compatible with the Management Plan.	Neither Council adopted or implemented these plans resulting in inappropriate development at Orchid Beach..
Shrinking Town areas	Both Happy Valley and Eurong township reserves are many times larger than the area covered by the existing developments. The Councils have been asked to allow the surplus area to be incorporated into the National Park.	Both Councils have been reluctant to even contemplate this but leave road maintenance within the reserves to the QPWS.
4. Camping		
Indian Head	The use of the informal camping ground below Indian Head by up to 300 people on most nights is a disgrace. There are no amenities. Both FIDO and traditional owners want the area closed to camping.	The EPA continue to allow this obscene camping to continue because they believe closed it would only transfer the problem.
Waddy Point	Although the RAM Act was used to stop anti logging protesters camping more than 21 days in the same spot in 1990, no action has been taken to move overstaying campers from Waddy Point.	Professional fishers remain in permanent beach camps at Waddy Point defying the RAM Act. The EPA does nothing.
Free Range	The deterioration of the foreshore areas as a result of overuse has been a constant FIDO theme since we unilaterally stopped Eli Creek camping in 1981. FIDO wants regulated pre-booked camping.	EPA staff are opposed to more serviced camping grounds on the basis of cost and the added workload.
5. Natural Resource Management Including Fire, Fishing, Ferals, Weeds		
Fire Policy	There was an issue of the lack of fire from 1980 until 1999. Now the issue is establishing an appropriate ecological fire regime which emulates traditional Aboriginal burning practices.	The “controlled burns” are more determined by public service awards than ecology with midday fires being the result
Banksia Serial Killing	Vegetation, particularly banksias, as far as 20 metres from the road side, is being removed to create unnatural firebreaks. This irrational and unjustified EPA obsession is changing the island’s World Heritage character.	In 1996 following an independent assessment this practice was thought to have stopped but it quickly resumed and continues.
Marine Resource management	The EPA has failed to accept responsibility for managing the marine part of the World Heritage area. The moves to establish both a fisheries Management Plan and a zoned marine park around the island languish	The EPA has deferred for too long to Queensland Fisheries which has had an appalling record as far as sustainability. Political action may correct this.
Fishing Expo	This is an inappropriate use of a World Heritage site purely as an advertising gimmick. It is ecologically unsound and places undue human pressure on the area closest to the Top End wilderness.	The current agreement expires in 2005 and FIDO hopes that it will not be renewed
Fishers Access	Access and other de-facto rights being given to commercial fishers in the Top End are compromising its wilderness value.	FIDO disagrees that commercial fishers have “rights” denied to all others.
Weeds	Weeds represent a major threat to the long term integrity of Fraser Island. Most originate in the centres of human settlement.	Not enough is being done by Councils to control the situation.
Quarantine	FIDO wants a more pro-active regime to prevent the introduction of injurious agents (including ferals and pathogens) to the island.	The under-resourced EPA doesn’t even have quarantine on its radar.
Dingoes	FIDO doesn’t support the Government’s knee jerk reaction to shooting every dingo deemed to represent a threat to humans.	The Government is yet to adopt a more enlightened policy.
Brumbies	FIDO has long supported the removal of brumbies.	This is belatedly occurring in 2003.
6. Research and Monitoring		
Reporting	There is an urgent need for more transparency in why the EPA makes the decisions it does and would like regular written reports.	The last report was produced in January 2003. We are still waiting for the next.
Research	There is no regular publication of the abstracts of research which has been done on Fraser Island nor research in progress	The EPA has been asked to appoint a Research Coordinator to address this.
Monitoring	While the EPA counts human movements little monitoring occurs.	More focus is needed on natural resources

2008 — Report after Five Years Lack of Progress

FIDO campaigned for six years to save Fraser Island from being mined for its minerals. FIDO then campaigned for a further 14 years against a hostile Bjelke-Petersen Government to have its outstanding World Heritage values recognized and exploitation of its forests stopped. The Goss Government placed the management of the entire island in the hands of what is now Queensland Parks and Wildlife. Then the Queensland and Australian Government did a *Pontius Pilate* while the agency responsible has allowed this natural wonder of the world to slowly degrade.

Degradation of Lakes:

It isn't only FIDO ringing the alarm bells over the state of Fraser Island's unique lakes. The public has a right to be outraged at the sheer indifference of those who should have been responsible for protecting the lakes.

Basin Lake: Despite alarm bells ringing that Basin Lake may have become dead. And that all of the turtles had died and there is little sign of any other life in it the response of the QPW wasn't to immediately undertake some basic water quality sampling but to suggest that too many people may have been peeing and the lake and therefore it should be closed to swimmers. In fact months after the alarm bells started ringing the QPW hasn't either carried out the water sampling nor closed the lake and this epitomizes the paralysis in taking any positive actions to protect Fraser Island's World Heritage values.



Lake Allom now has cloudy instead of clear water and the dramatic rise in the lake levels indicates that road run-off contributed largely to both the volume and the deterioration of the water quality. However there remains a stalemate about monitoring. The QPW claims to have plans to continue to close the offending road that is draining into the lake but says that without funding to build a new car-park nothing can happen!! Surely when such a large is so demonstrably and adversely impacted by a road the road should be closed immediately with or without a new car-park. The failure to take any action on the basis of insufficient funds is a cop-out of the highest order and some action is surely required before this lake goes the same way as Basin Lake.

Lake McKenzie continues to deteriorate due to the truckloads of sediment pouring into the lake but this also requires the qpw to take action to relocate the road away from the lake. They acknowledge that there is a problem but despite a budget of \$9M per annum claim they are unwilling to move unless they receive an extra \$2M to completely redevelop Lake McKenzie's access and amenities. This won't happen in the foreseeable future (if ever) and the QPW is using this as a reason to do nothing. They will all still be paid without having an extra responsibility.

Other Lakes: While FIDO's complaints at Lake Boomanjin were addressed the situation at Lake Birrabeen has only been marginally addressed because buses still enter the lake catchment areas and that of Lake Jennings with longer-term impacts.

Roads, Transport and Access:

Wanggoolba Creek continues to be impacted by road between Central Station and Pile Valley that is pouring sediments into the creek and causing landslip and destabilization between the road and the creek. The cause of the degradation is acknowledged by the QPW and they have a solution that like the solution to the Lakes problems is in the "Never-Never" Land. It is easier to turn a blind eye to the impacts of this road and particularly especially the impacts of heavier vehicles than taking any positive action to remedy the situation. After all they have gotten away with doing nothing for the years of the Beattie and Bligh Governments.

Hook Point Road: The failure to close some beaches on Fraser Island remains a very vexed issue particularly the beach between Dilli Village and Hook Point. There has been a succession of Ministers since Dean Wells promised FIDO that this beach would close. It's like Premier Beattie's broken promise to create a single authority to manage Fraser Island.

No light rail progress: Despite the Environmental Protection Agency being part of the Ministry for Climate Change, Innovation and Sustainability" all of which have should have reason to be interested in seeing a light rail established on Fraser Island. There has been strong opposition to the light rail from within the QPW because such a dramatic innovation could change patterns of recreation and the *status quo*. As a result despite interest from Tourism Queensland and others exploring the option of a light rail still isn't on the agenda. How is that for *innovation*? FIDO raised the matter with Premier Bligh but her written response to FIDO was allowed to be left in the hands of opponents to light rail without reasons being given or alternative options being examined.

4WDs only rule ignored: FIDO is appalled that the QPW doesn't insist that only 4WDs will be allowed on Fraser Island (that would exclude trail bikes). Instead the agency sits on its hands resulting in one Bundaberg biker recently ended up as a paraplegic after a Fraser Island accident.

The long promised draft Aircraft Strategy has been produced.

Site Visitor Capacity Study: What is happening regarding the Draft Site Visitor Capacity Study remains a mystery. The process has taken over two years and has been yet another excuse for inaction by the QPW. It was recently announced that the SVC report would be released without any reference to the members of the Community Advisory Committee not represented in the discussions. At this stage no voluntary conservation body has been able to comment on it although the commercial tour interests have had the inside running and have been making high level submissions on something being withheld from everybody else. Excluding opportunities for formal public drafts reflects a culture in the QPW of avoiding public input just as it did with the revised Great Sandy Region Management Plan.

Major Flaw: FIDO believes that the major flaw in the SVC process was the failure to consider the impact of the transport and access in the determination of the capacities of specific

sites but we are being denied an opportunity to make this point by being deliberately shut out of the process.

There is a further matter of concern on transport and access and that concerns the pedestrian access from the beach to Dilli Village.

Building Bridges: Despite the constant moaning of lack of funds the QPW has found sufficient funds to repair and upgrade every road bridge on Fraser Island but it hasn't had enough funds to replace the simple pedestrian bridge across Govi Creek from the beach into Dilli Village. Although the QPW destroyed the previous pedestrian bridge over the creek ostensibly on safety grounds it now requires all Dilli Village users (over 12,000 camper nights per year) walk 500 metres along a very loose and narrow sandy road to reach the beach. That unnecessarily increases the vehicular traffic between Dilli Village and the beach and reduces the attractiveness and appeal of Dilli Village as a campground and exposes the pedestrians who risk it to much greater danger. The former pedestrian log bridge that was removed before the University of the Sunshine Coast took over Dilli Village must surely be safer than walkers confronting vehicles on a sandy track.

Great Walk Extension: After 8 months FIDO and the National Parks Association of Queensland are still waiting for the indecisive QPW (and the Minister) to accept the offer that volunteers be allowed to extend the Fraser Island Great Walk in the memory of the late George Haddock according to QPW specifications.

Land Titles and Planning

The recent local government reorganization in Queensland has been to the benefit of Fraser Island bringing it under a single local authority but not an authority that integrates all aspects of management.

FIDO continues to urge the Queensland Government to acquire the Moon Point freehold as a priority for acquisition.

Getting the right priorities: Unfortunately the public is being excluded from any part of the determination QPW priorities resulting in silly projects such as building boardwalks in the coloured sands (that destroy the natural aesthetics and are already covered with sand eroded from the cliff faces) to take priority over a more urgent project to protect Indian Head where the surface of this headland is being irreversibly eroded away for lack of management.



Without consultation the QPW has elected to undertake this work at the Cathedrals rather than do anything to save the fragile and vulnerable vegetation at Indian Head

Camping

There was progress on camping with the closure of Indian Head. Luckily the demand for camping plateaued more than five years ago but there continues to be some degradation due to free-range camping along the foredunes and this has been identified in recent research by Dr. Thomas Schlacker as having a major on-going adverse impact

Natural Resource Management (including fire, fishing, ferals and weeds)

FIDO believes that since natural resource management has most to do with protecting World Heritage values it deserves a much higher priority in QPW management than recreation management. As result of the efforts of FINIA and volunteers (including FIDO) Fraser Island weeds are being brought under control but little or no progress made has been made on the other Natural Resource issues FIDO identified in 2003.

Research and Monitoring

The secrecy and lack of transparency in the QPW are matters of great concern. Vital information and data is being deliberately withheld from the public – data on the state of the lakes and on the implementation of the fire regime, on The process of the advisory committees remains a sham as long as the QPW goes ahead with its own agenda without consulting stakeholders and irrespective of what stakeholders may say. The flimsy reports provided usually anachronistic by months by the time they are delivered and quite irrelevant.

Fraser Island is now recognized globally as one of the natural wonders of the world. It annually generates almost half a billion for the Australian economy. For almost 40 years FIDO has fought to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources and now sees the management of those resources left in the hands of an agency that lacks even a caring environmental ethic. Having invested so much voluntary effort we aren't prepared to sit idly by and paid bureaucrats allow Fraser Island to run to rack and ruin. The fight FIDO is now engaged in may be more difficult than any of the previous campaigns FIDO has engaged in but we won't allow this total indifference to the outcomes for Fraser Island to continue.



FIDO believes that there are many higher priorities for capital expenditure on Fraser Island than this futile unaesthetic boardwalk and artificial casuarinas plantation at the Pinnacles where erosion is both natural and inevitable.

Fraser Island Dangers (other than Dingoes)

A spate of recent vehicle and other accidents show that the greatest danger on Fraser Island comes from motor vehicles and people but these issues are not being adequately addressed. The new dingo fences at Eurong and Happy Valley are likely to have “one-off cost of \$750,000. However the mounting and recurring cost of medical evacuations is inestimable and the Queensland Government seems reluctant to pursue seemingly obvious risk minimization strategies.

FIDO calls for a reassessment of priorities

The Queensland Government expenditure on the construction of Happy Valley and Eurong dingo fences of \$750,000 was significantly exceeded. While this outlay was supposedly to minimize risks and protect the public from the prospect of more dingo attacks the Bligh Government has turned a blind eye to other far more serious and potentially fatal risks. Many serious motor vehicle accidents are ignored by the QPW, an agency that so obsessed with risk minimization that it is prepared to sacrifice healthy trees rather than allow any risk of a tree or limb fall. The QPW turns a blind eye to accidents that turn trail bikers into paraplegics and the Queensland Government and the QPW are prepared to continue shooting dingoes but refuse to address the risks associated with 4WDs especially in the hands of inexperienced drivers.

Likewise after a year of great growth resulting in creasing biomass on Fraser Island the fuel reduction and ecological burning regime falls further and further behind and the danger of a catastrophic conflagration continues to increase. Some idea of the potential severity of the fire storms being anticipated can be judged by the extent and dimensions of the firebreaks that have been created. Yet despite the obsession with building the firebreaks, little is being done to reduce the ever accumulating fuel load that presents an ever greater danger to the ecological integrity of Fraser Island and a major safety risk to the number of visitors to the island who are more interested in exploring the island's interior.

Head On Collision at Eurong

On 10th August a head-on collision on Fraser's beach resulted in eight people being airlifted to hospital. The serious collision between a Backpacker vehicle and a utility vehicle occurred on Eastern Beach, five kilometres north of Eurong. Of the two men in the ute, one man suffered suspected spinal injuries and another head injury. Of the 11 people in the backpacker “troopie”, six were flown to hospital with varying injuries that were not considered life-threatening.

Ngkala Rocks Road Collapse Hospitalizes Men

When part of the Ngkala Rocks by-pass track gave way during the passage of a convoy in early August collapsed, one vehicle tumbled down a sheer seven-metre cliff to the coffee rock below. Two fishing enthusiasts were injured. The passenger in the 4WD suffered a fractured pelvis, as well as neck, back and abdominal injuries, while the driver suffered lacerations. Two rescue helicopters were required for the medical evacuations. Without any supervision the vehicle was stripped of any worthwhile removable parts.

Many people argue that the top end of Fraser Island should be a wilderness area and that no vehicles other than for management purposes should be allowed north of Wathumba Creek or north of Ngkala Rocks. The

Management Plan established a compromise by closing the western beach from Sandy Cape Lighthouse to Wathumba Creek and stating that the Ngkala by-pass track would not be allowed to be upgraded.



This is the shambles seen on Indian Head November 2008.

A 47-year-old Brisbane fisherman fell two metres from Indian Head rocks in July and was medivaced to Nambour hospital with a suspected broken hip. The accident could have been worse had he had fallen from where most tourists gather.

Trail-bike Casualties

The story only emerged in the Bundaberg “News-Mail” of one accident that has very serious implications for Queensland taxpayers. There has been no mention of this or any of the 4WD accidents on Fraser Island in the skimpy and inadequate reports provided by the QPW

On 15th June when Bundaberg photographer Steve Richter flew over the handlebars of his trail bike on Fraser Island, he thought this time would be just like other crashes. He expected to get up, brush himself off and continue his ride across Fraser Island. But an instant after he hit the ground, half his body went numb. His spine fractured and in a second he was a paraplegic. The 32-year-old's other injuries, namely a punctured lung and broken ribs, shot pain through the rest of his body. He was flown to Maroochydore by the Bundaberg Energex Community Rescue Helicopter and transferred to another Energex chopper for the final leg to Brisbane. He was expected to spend about four to six months in Brisbane on rehabilitation before returning home to Bundaberg.

On 13 November a 25-year-old woman was airlifted to Hervey Bay Hospital after falling from her motorcycle on Fraser Island's beach at night and being knocked unconscious.

FIDO points out that under the Great Sandy Region Management Plan trail bikes were not to be allowed on Fraser Island. The 1994 Management Plan stated only 4WDs should be allowed on Fraser Island. In view of FIDO's pressure to ban trail bikes the revised Management Plan in 2005 didn't specifically exclude trail bikes stating in a cop-out: “...*Two-wheel-drive vehicles will not be permitted on Fraser Island ... All-terrain vehicles will not be permitted in the Region, unless required for specific management purposes and registered for such by the Department of Transport.*” Now QPW doesn't have to enforce its long neglected rule to exclude trail bikes.

Climate change report's grim revelations

QUEENSLAND will become hotter and super-cyclones will batter the coast as far south as Brisbane by 2070, the nation's top scientists have warned. Scientists have made stark predictions about climate change and paints a bleak picture of stronger and more frequent cyclones, coral bleaching and the extinction and loss of flora and fauna. For years FIDO has been trying to draw public attention to the severe implications of climate change that may well be at least as for Fraser Island it is anticipated to be for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. If the same resources applied to investigating climate change on the reef were applied to Fraser Island we believe the public alarm bells about climate change would be ringing even louder.

Australian average temperatures have increased by 0.9 °C since 1950, with significant regional variations. Since 1950, Queensland's annual average temperature has increased at a faster rate than the national average, with the rate of temperature increase ranging from 0.07 °C/decade in the far north to 0.32 °C/decade in the south-west of the state.

Most of Queensland has experienced a substantial rainfall decline since 1950, with coastal areas south of Cairns experiencing declines greater than 50 mm per decade. A greater proportion of total rainfall now falls in extreme events, and there are longer periods between rainfall events.

Apart from the changes that may be attributed to the fire regime we anticipate that there will be three major changes:

1. Being composed almost entirely of erodible sand Fraser Island is extremely vulnerable to sea-level changes and we anticipate that about 15% of Fraser Island will be reclaimed by the sea with even a one metre sea level rise because that is the amount Fraser Island grew by when the last sea level fall of one metre occurred about 5,500 years ago.
2. Four of the major tree species, Scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus racemosa*), Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), Tallowwood (*Eucalyptus microcorrys*) and the endemic Satinay (*Syncarpia hillii*) that are at the northern limit of their range, will drop out of the ecosystem as temperatures rise. These represent about 70 % of the larger trees occurring on Fraser Island. There has been no modeling to show what the implications of this loss may be.
3. Fraser Island's sandblows are near the top of its most iconic World Heritage features but they are already showing signs of disappearing due to some evidence of climate change. These changes which are subject to a forthcoming paper by Israeli scientist, Dr Naom Levin, may well see all of the sandblows on Fraser Island disappear during the 21st century at the rate they are currently being colonized by vegetation. Naom attributes the sandblow loss to the lack of cyclones. He will be back in Australia to present a paper at FIDO's Conference on 24th July. In the meantime an abstract including a couple of dramatic comparative photographs can be found on FIDO's web site: www.fido.org.au

While the Queensland Government has admitted its strategy to protect coastal towns and suburbs from climate change is a failure, and even acknowledged that the Great Barrier Reef faces major problems, it has yet to even start to face up to the implications that climate change will have on Fraser Island and the whole Great Sandy Region. In the meantime the Bligh Government just blusters on with its "business as usual" style and that means more turning

its back on the environmental realities. In a King Canute-like act it has appealed for federal funding to help build sea walls and levees to hold back storm surges and rising sea levels.

Climate Change is to be one of the more topical issues to be addressed at FIDO's Conference on 24th July

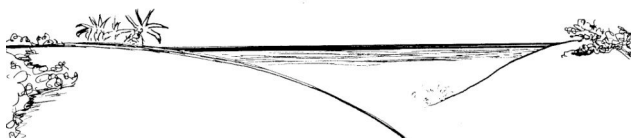
In the meantime Queensland's Minister for Climate Change, Andrew McNamara, who is also the Member for Hervey Bay and represents Fraser Island in State Parliament has publicly set out his agenda to address concerns of his constituents. These include water piped from Fraser Island, a desalination plant built and Lenthall Dam raised some more. He supports Stage 1 of the Traveston Crossing Dam believing that it will have little effect on the downstream reaches of the Mary River. The Traveston Crossing Dam will still be a factor in his constituency. He says the Fraser Coast has to take a critical look at how it secures water for its future.

Fraser Weather Makes News

Unseasonal above average rainfall has given some reprieve to the lakes and other Fraser Island ecosystems. The rains have resulted from a series of low-pressure systems centred just off the Fraser Island coast.

In early June some of the strongest rain was recorded in the Fraser Coast area and the Fraser Island area which received between 200mm and 300mm. Houses at Hervey Bay and businesses at Torquay were inundated by floodwaters and campsites shut down on Fraser Island Kingfisher Bay Resort on Fraser Island received one of the heaviest falls — 180 millimetres. This added to some of the deluge in Spring 2007 and January when Fraser Island had to be evacuated due to severe storms.

Apart from lake filling rain the La Niña weather brought strong gusty winds up to 110kmh. These severe winds, big waves and rough seas to chewed away at the island's coast. There is now severe erosion evident along the beach immediately north of Hook Point reach to Gerrawea Creek and in the area north of Waddy Point. Offshore the severe weather resulted in a yachtsman being killed by a boom and his widow having to be rescued.



Catching the Littoral Drift

A message in a wine bottle thrown into the sea on Fraser Island by a honeymooning German couple in July 2006 was found two years later washed up on Hinchinbrook Island's Ramsay Beach after traveling over 1000 kilometres. JCU professor of geo-science Jon Nott said, "It is quite remarkable it was not broken by boats, reefs or headlands. It tells us (scientists) how long it takes for things to move up the coast."

Fraser Figures Flat are Falling

Unbeknown to the QPW managers for Fraser Island based in Maryborough and Hervey Bay (who apparently don't have direct access to the statistics or read the Annual Reports of the Environmental Protection Agency) the trend in Fraser Island visitation seem to have plateaued as the following table FIDO has compiled from EPA Annual Report on the web:

Table 1

Five Year Trend in Fraser Visitation

Year	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
No. Camping	118,916	104,466	106,950	115,010	119,077
No. Camper nights	320,974	292,505	311,401	N/A	300,616
No. on Commercial Tours	217,824	174,429	174,619	223,000	133,633
Vehicle Service Permits (F.I.Ts)	41,044	35,522	30,069	34,082	28,575

Source: Recreation area statistics published in Queensland Environmental Protection Agency Annual Reports

The above table makes it clear that visitation to Fraser Island has not increased during the past five (5) years and if anything has fallen. The most significant fall is in the number of fit vehicles. There may possibly be more person per vehicle although there is no data to show that) but the overall decline over the period is 25-30%.

There has been also some bouncing around in the figures for the fee-paying passengers on commercial tours.

FIDO's observations some years ago that the number of campers had plateaued seems to be borne out by the above figures.

It is coincidental that these figures cover the period since FIDO last raised This data then raises the question as to why when the pressure is not increasing are the island and its natural values depreciating so significantly as discussed in the Issues Paper

Impacts on Fraser tourism

1. Fuel Prices: There is already clear evidence that soaring fuel prices are resulting in declining tourist numbers to Fraser Island. Kingfisher Resort's managing director, Gary Smith, says the impact of high fuel prices on the drive market is its biggest problem, but he was most concerned about the retention of flight services into Hervey Bay following the cutting of Qantas and Jetstar have cut services to north Queensland and the Gold Coast. The biggest decline in visitor numbers so far is most noticeable in the number of FITs (Free and Independent Travellers)

2. Pope's Visit: Pilgrims from the World Youth Day event in Sydney had a better-than-expected impact on Fraser Island tourism on Queensland's Fraser coast. Over 500 delegates visited the region following the event on top of hundreds of pilgrims prior to the assembly with the Pope in Sydney.

3. The Weather: Severe weather and the QPW obsession with safety has caused Fraser Island and Inskip Point to be closed to campers. The dramatic closures resulted in not only many discontented campers but also commercial interests on Fraser Island and in Hervey Bay and Rainbow Beach. The EPA has been embarrassed in having to refund many camping fees it had collected. Hopefully future severe weather events won't result in such schmozzles

Fraser's Day Visiting Rangers.

A major controversy surrounds the news that Fraser Island rangers are flown to the island and back to the mainland daily at taxpayers' expense.

Fraser Island has 48 ranger staff. Very few live permanently on the island, and while some are happy to work shifts of 10 days on and 4 days off and use provided accommodation on the island while there, about one third are choosing to live at Hervey Bay and fly in and fly out at an undisclosed cost to taxpayers.

The outrage is made worse because it seems that the rangers are turning their noses up the \$2 million eco-cabins (15 in all) designed by a renowned architect and now costing more money to allow them to commute daily.

While the public may be bewildered that rangers don't want to live on the island, it needs to be appreciated that most married rangers have partners who can get jobs on the mainland and not on the island and that there are no schools on the island for their children. It is therefore understandable that rangers should have similar expectations for a home life as other members of the public and want to be with their mainland based families.

FIDO laments the changes where once Rangers lived permanently on their parks for years and came to know them and all aspects of their ecology intimately. The current generation of rangers has different values and expectations.

While it is increasingly hard to gain help from the rangers at night in emergencies because there's "hardly any" left on the island, EPA Parks executive director Alan Feely has defended the policy saying, *"Helping staff to commute has improved retention rates markedly, improved morale and lowered recruitment and training costs."*

Disappearing? Fraser Island now appears on an unenviable list of doomed places. The well-known international guidebook Frommers has Fraser Island in the *"500 places people should see before they disappear"*. It made a point of featuring it in news items appearing around the (at least English speaking) world. The 500 sites includes the Dead Sea, Oregon's Willow Creek Preserve and a sacred primeval forest in Nigeria. It lists the top 500 sites to see before climate change, development, or lack of finances for restoration or conservation renders them non-existent or ruined.

Fraser's Dingo Fence Controversy

In February Queensland Parks and Wildlife began a prolonged process of enclosing Eurong and Happy Valley with dingo-proof fences. Residents though are opposed to the concept of being “fenced in” and claim that the dingo deterrent grids are a disaster waiting to happen. They are upset that two people were badly injured in May after slipping on them. Nobody has since made the same mistake.

The effective operation of the dingo fences around the two townships requires very effective gates and grids to keep dingoes out. Even grids that are supposed to be only for vehicle access don't stop dingoes that can deftly tip-toe across the bars unless electrified wires are added above the bars. However gates won't work either if residents insist in propping them open and there are many pedestrian gates in each compound to enable residents to get out easily.

FIDO's position is that the grids are not a perfect and not an ideal solution, but it is the best option available to protect the island's dingoes being decimated if Queensland politicians again succumb to knee-jerk reactions following another fatal dingo attack. By separating people in their accommodation from the dingoes the dingoes can't become “habituated” that is a precursor to aggressive behaviour. It also makes the residential area much safer for young children who without this fence to exclude dingoes could not be deemed safe playing outside without close adult supervision.

Fraser Island dingoes may be wiped out if there continues to be conflict with dogs attacking people.

While “residents” have received a lot of publicity for their objections to the enclosures. There are hundreds times more people who take up casual residence in the two villages. Those casual visitors aren't as familiar with dingo behaviour and their children are now much safer with the fence.

It needs to be borne in mind that the data from the last national Australian Census reveals that there are fewer than forty (40) people in total who list either Eurong or Happy Valley as their home address. FIDO questions what gives these fewer than 40 have a higher priority than the safety of hundreds of thousands of non-resident visitors.

The fences are badly placed aesthetically. FIDO agrees that there wasn't adequate consultation to provide a more acceptable outcome. This resulted in needless hostility from some of the very small (but very vocal) local communities. They have resorted to claiming the fences resulted in a build-up of snakes, rodents and bandicoots inside the fences even while dingoes were still roaming the villages. Another ploy was the discovery of what might be a human bon in the path of the Happy Valley fence.

Failure by the consultation-shy QPW to openly engage with many interests much before bringing in the bulldozers to clear the swathes around the two villages was a major mistake. Almost everyone was amazed to learn were the fences were to be located. The swathes are supposed to also act as firebreaks but they are now major corridors to allow the establishment of a giant circle of weeds ringing the villages where FIDO volunteers have been working for years to bring the weeds under control. Nobody from FIDO any more than the residents and property owners was consulted over the route of the fences.

FIDO's position on dingoes

FIDO is concerned about the future of Fraser Island dingoes. They are a recognized World Heritage value for the island. They are recognized as part of the natural fauna. Saving the Fraser Island dingoes is one of the FIDO's major priorities. However we see the biggest threat to the dingoes resulting from the close interaction between humans and the dingoes that resulted in the dingoes becoming habituated. That led to them to losing all fear of humans and becoming aggressive. That aggression led to the death of Clinton Gage and the subsequent shooting of 80 dingoes

If we want to save the dingoes we have to get them back to how they were when they were rarely seen and kept their distance from humans. The present management is trying to achieve that outcome and has been reasonably successful and this is reflected in the dramatic decline in the number of incidents involving aggressive dingoes.

There are only a few areas on Fraser Island that are fenced off from the dingoes. These are four campgrounds and three villages. The total area from which dingoes are excluded is less than 200 ha of the 167,000 ha on Fraser Island. That leaves them over 99.9% of the island to hunt in and about 100 dingoes live entirely off the natural ecosystem. Fraser Island dingoes have an elaborate social order of hierarchy based on the survival of the fittest and it is only the weak outcasts from the packs that have sought (and continue to seek) human hand-outs.

Unfortunately there are always going to be some wild animals who will starve to death. Nature is cruel and determines that only the strongest will survive. That is why humans are surviving (at the expense of so many other animal species).

The sensational story of dingoes starving on Fraser Island doesn't show the strong healthy ones that are surviving and will if we don't mis-manage Fraser Island altogether continue to produce new generations of dingoes into the future.

FIDO doesn't believe that the whole population is threatened by the present management. Just the weak are at risk and this has always been the case. Hand feeding the weak ones won't be saving the population of Fraser Island dingoes as a whole. Playing God to the weak and to prevent bad photos in newspapers will not help the future of Fraser Island dingoes where the survival of the fittest is the rule of nature.



Funding demanded for Fraser Island

The clamour demanding the Commonwealth provide more funding for the World Heritage-listed Fraser Island off the Queensland coast continues to grow.

Andrew McNamara said that the Queensland Government puts in about \$9 million currently, the Federal Government puts in about \$160,000. The Fraser Island Community Advisory Committee says the island attracts around 350,000 visitors a year and urgently wants \$5 million from the Federal Government to address the degradation at the most the most critical areas Lake McKenzie, Indian Head and Eli Creek.

Chairman David Hay says the island is chronically underfunded in comparison with other world heritage areas such as Kakadu. He said, *"We're talking about things like toilets at very popular places like Lake McKenzie, which currently have septic systems which is just totally unacceptable on a World Heritage-listed sand island."*

While not getting close to the \$5M the CAC is seeking FIDO unsuccessfully sought \$250,000 Community Coastcare grant to carry out work on Indian Head. Despite Queensland's huge coastline only one part of the state, Moreton Bay, was identified as eligible for these \$250'000 grants. That instead went to South Stradbroke Island and Fraser Island will not feature in any one of more than 70 projects to receive federal Coastcare funding.

More Dredging for Wanggoolba Creek

The Queensland Government has foreshadowed plans to change the boundaries of the Great Sandy Strait marine park to allow dredging between Fraser Island and the mainland. FIDO is particularly concerned at the proposal to again dredge Wanggoolba Creek on Fraser Island where FIDO predicted back in 1985 that this would be a never ending project in one of the most important. Andrew McNamara says he has the proposals but no decisions have been made yet. Presumably this like so many other potentially unpopular decisions such as the Traveston Crossing Dam will be put off until after the 2009 Queensland elections.



Two Versions of the same story

The story in plain print was published in the Sunshine Coast Daily on 20 November. The Italics in brackets are the responses from the victim:

A 27-year-old Scottish man was airlifted to Hervey Bay Hospital after being bitten by a snake on Fraser Island.

The man had been camping with five companions (*I was not camping but staying at a backpackers hostel*) when he decided to walk through bush near Happy Valley (*I was not walking in the bush but was returning from using the internet facilities walking on the boardwalk towards my dorm*) without wearing shoes. (*I was wearing sandals as was everybody else I met in the vicinity.*)

The snake slithered over his feet and when he tried to shake it off, it bit him on the toe. (*I did not kick the snake, I merely reacted after being bitten*). (*Incidentally it happened in the dark in a very poorly lit area!*)

It is believed the snake was not venomous.

FIDO's Comment: Fraser Island stories often have a way of being distorted by the media. A similar distortion below epitomizes the problem with some reporting.

A front page story of the Fraser Coast Chronicle on 6th November claiming that a dingo pup was so shocked by the electric fence it was subsequently run over by a vehicle turned out to be extremely inaccurate, anachronistic, (referring to an incident on 17th October) and sensationalized to front page. Everyone with direct knowledge conceded it was an untrue account. The only truth is that a pup was seen to be zapped and like cattle touching an electric fence, they don't do it again.

The Mystery Of the Coloured Sands

FIDO recently made an amazing observation of deeply coloured red sand in Hammerstone sandblow near Wabby Lakes. This rich colour seems to have developed in less than 50 years and is associated with a crypto-biotic crust. It may have far reaching implications but too much to discuss in MOONBI. See the full details in this background on FIDO's web site: www.fido.org.au. There you will also discover a more detailed list of observations from recent inspections.

Fraser Island Conference

If you want to keep abreast of factors really important to the future of Fraser Island's values — climate change, transport and tourism, dingoes etc.. make sure that you don't miss out on the conference at Walkabout Creek, the Gap, Brisbane 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Friday 24th July



Invitation

From the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland
Illustrated lecture marking Queensland's Sequi Centenary

Great Sandy Region: A Natural World Wonder

by John Sinclair

Hon Sec and Honorary Project Officer FIDO

7.30 pm on Tuesday 3 February 2009

at the RGSQ's premises:— 237 Milton Road, Milton.