

# Fraser Island Defenders Organization

## President's Annual Report — July 2017

In the last 12 months since my last Annual Report, FIDO has continued to pursue projects to protect K'gari (Fraser Island) as well as continuing our strong educational, collaborative and advocacy roles.

### Education

**Citizen Science:** FIDO conducted a Beach to Boomanjin and Birrabeen Bioblitz from 28 November to 4 December to record the biodiversity in the bioregions and the dune systems between the Southern Lakes and Dilli Village. This attracted widespread interest and was assisted by a close collaboration between FIDO, QPWS and the University of the Sunshine Coast that made a major contribution and trusts that the Bioblitz helps add significantly to its growing Fraser Island Repository in its library. The Bioblitz also played a part in FIDO acquiring five Acoustic Sound Recorders (Listening posts) that have been provided on permanent loan to the QPWS to help identify the presence of birds and frogs by their calls. FIDO has established a Nature Walk to help interpret Fraser Island's natural environment and unique values in Eurong, the most visited place on K'Gari.

**Weather Stations:** FIDO has established its second K'Gari on-line weather station to enable the people to scrutinize weather data for both Happy Valley and Eurong on-line in real time and is planning to install two more weather stations over the next 12 months.

**Conference:** FIDO continues to play a strong educational role. Plans are well advanced for the 2017 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, *Time, Tide and Tourism* on 16<sup>th</sup> August at the University of the Sunshine Coast's Sippy Downs Campus.

**Publications:** Four backgrounders were produced in the last year including *Balarrgan and the Timber Industry (Part 1)*, the impact of beach traffic, a history of sandmining and Ethel Richards story. As well as producing two MOONBIs for the year, FIDO also continued with Electronic Newsletters to keep members informed on vital issues. FIDO's web site continues to be maintained by Keith Sinclair and it is a resource being widely used by students and for public reference.

### Collaborations and Volunteers

Over the years FIDO has developed a number of great collaborations but each year these become stronger and more productive as FIDO works with partners on projects of mutual benefit in helping to discharge our responsibilities for protecting the natural integrity of Fraser Island (K'gari). The major catalyst for this has been FINIA (the Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance) which FIDO strongly supports. It is a collaboration of government, non-government and community partners.

Collaboration with the Eurong Resort and the Kingfisher Group through transport, accommodation and hospitality is extending FIDO's capacity to carry out our weed management and bush regeneration projects and establish our online weather station for Eurong. Collaboration with the Happy Valley's Fraser Island Wilderness retreat has helped maintain home for our equipment there and a base for our weather station there. Collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is enabling FIDO to assist in expanding the capacity of the Eurong nursery so necessary since no plant material (seeds included) should leave K'gari and none should be taken on. QPWS also provides free access and ready consultations. Collaboration with the Fraser Coast Regional Council has provided us with a very significant equipment base at Eurong. As well FIDO is developing relationships with landholders who are assisting in our on-going projects. Our ever-growing collaboration with the University of the Sunshine Coast is assisting them to establish a much needed Fraser Island Repository within the Sippy Downs Library and is providing assistance and a venue for our 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference. The staff of USC have been most cooperative. The financial support from the BMRG (Burnett Mary Regional Group) under its Keeping it Great program has funded FIDO's weeding and bush regeneration programs.

I would like to thank all of these partners in helping FIDO to achieve so much more over the past 12 months than would have been possible without their contributions. We also hope that they may similarly have been assisted by FIDO's efforts.

**Weeds and Bush Regeneration:** In the last 12 months FIDO has organized and delivered ten week-long trips for volunteers to work on the weeds in the two main epicentres of weed infestation Eurong and Happy Valley. In the last 12 months more than 50 FIDO volunteers who have come from all over Australia but mostly from South East Queensland have contributed over 2,000 hours of on-ground work. This is making a big impact and helping restore the natural integrity to those villages. We are particularly indebted to Peter Shooter for accepting the leadership role for our Happy Valley working bees that have been particularly challenging with a daunting challenge to remove Abrus weed and to Maree Prior for leading the very popular

working bees at Eurong and to Suzanne Wilson assisting building up the capacity of the nursery. FIDO continues to fight against the accidental import of more alien species and pests and diseases with capacity to destroy and continues to promote a nursery of plants native to Fraser Island. FIDO has entered into a Deed of Agreement with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to manage weed on about 600 hectares of Unallocated State Land (USL) in and surrounding the Eurong and Happy Valley villages.

**George Haddock Track:** While advancing the George Haddock Track has stalled FIDO still has obligations for maintenance of the work established during the Friends of Parks program in 2014 when more than half the track was cleared and the first shelter established. Over Easter 2017 14 volunteers worked on our maintenance obligations. Unfortunately further work on the track has come to a standstill pending Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation approval to construct 10 sections of the 26 sections of the overall 52-kilometre track.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have contributed to the on-going efforts that are making positive gains.

**Sustainable Transport Study:** FIDO remains most concerned that visitation to K'gari results in over a tonne of sand for every visitor being moved in heavy rainfall events. FIDO has established the Barbara Winkley Scholarship to enable the University of the Sunshine Coast to fund a PhD candidate to assess all of the options to address this issue. The USC has selected Ross Waldron to undertake this study that will take three years to complete. It is hoped that the study that has just begun will help address this vexed issue including the option of a light rail solution. We look forward to a progress report at the 2017 conference.

### **Advocacy**

FIDO has a difficult role in that it is required to speak out strongly on some issues. FIDO is still concerned about the lack of any concrete measures to stop the degradation and erosion at Indian Head (Takky Woorroo) that continues to degrade while nothing is being done. FIDO continues to advocate for World Heritage renomination to recognize both Cooloola and additional values for Fraser Island. FIDO is concerned that a proposed Colton coal mine near the Susan River, Mary River and Great Sandy Strait would be a disaster for the environment, the Ramsar Wetlands and the Global environment as coal burning continues to heat the planet.

**Effects of Climate Change:** FIDO holds great concerns about the effects of Global heating and climate change on Fraser Island /K'gari. The summer of 2016-17, the hottest and driest on record for the Fraser Coast, took heavy toll on the natural environment. Several dominant plant species are at the northern limits of their range and for the second time in three years many plants due to the extreme weather.

FIDO continues its role of consultation through the Community Advisory Council meetings and processes that have at last begun again after being stalled for a year.

FIDO wishes to continue to work with the Butchulla people in extending and finishing the extension to the Great Walk and in protecting this marvellous island we all love and respect. FIDO acknowledges the huge task facing the new Provisional Body Corporate (PBC) since the gaining of Native Title and hope we can continue to work with them as we have done in the past.

**Political change:** Reintroducing environmental protection measures in Queensland by the Palaszczuk Government has continued to be a battle within the government and society. It seems the government is split over the need to stop the Adani mine.

**The Executive:** The Executive meets monthly and increasingly communicates electronically on key issues. I want to thank John C Sinclair, John Davey, John Cruickshank and Saren Starbridge (Vice Presidents), Marie Prior and Peter Shooter as well as our growing army of volunteers. Special thanks go to John Sinclair (Snr), and Jane Enchelmaier for the time they put into the running of the organization. Thank you all.

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, FIDO's work is ever more challenging but now we have the chance to bring light rail to K'gari.

*Colleen Enchelmaier*  
**President**

#### **Office Bearers 2016-17 Fraser Island Defenders Organisation**

**President:** Colleen Enchelmaier

**Hon Secretary and Honorary Project Officer:** John Sinclair (Snr)

**Treasurer:** Jane Enchelmaier

**Vice Presidents:** John C Sinclair, John Davey, Saren Starbridge and John Cruickshank