

# A Collaboration to fund GSS research

## Building the Collaboration

From 2016 a growing number of groups led by the Lock the Gate movement and the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee became increasingly concerned about the potential impacts of the proposed Colton Coal Mine. The proposed mine had managed to evade requirements to undertake a proper Environmental Impact Statement. State and Commonwealth Governments had allowed the proposal to proceed almost unchallenged. This allowed it to slip under the radar. As awareness has grown so has opposition to the mine.

A very active group based in the Noosa area formed the Great Sandy Strait Saviours. They organized a public meeting at Eumundi in August 2017 attended by more than 200 and brought more groups on board. They continue to be very active and organized a very impressive concert at Noosaville in December 2017 that drew in over 1,000.

Because the Colton Coal Mine was proposed for the mainland, the potential impacts weren't immediately obvious to FIDO. The *Watchdog of Fraser Island* was late adding its voice of protests. There is now very active collaboration between all groups. Some like the Great Sandy Strait Saviours are having a big impact in rising wider public awareness. Some such as Lock the Gate are building opposition to Colton as a larger part of their national campaign against coal mining generally.

FIDO, the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee and the Greater Mary Association have decided to work on building a case against the mine based on research of potential impacts on Great Sandy Strait.

## The Great Sandy Strait Research Fund

**On 12<sup>th</sup> December the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with two other groups with a great interest and stake in the Mary River catchment that includes Great Sandy Strait. Contributions from the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) and the Greater Mary Association (GMA) have created a fund starting at \$25,000 to fund research into the potential impacts of the discharge of Colton coal mine water on Great Sandy Strait.**

The administrators of the Research Fund will be the Gympie based **Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee**. Unlike FIDO and the GMA, MRCCC has its own premises and a very professional full-time staff. MRCCC has a long history of defending the natural integrity of Great Sandy Strait. It initiated the unsuccessful request for a review of the EPBC approval for the Colton Mine. It was dismissed by Canberra because it was deemed to contain no new and compelling evidence. That is why the new collaboration is working to fund research to produce compelling new data and evidence that can't be so lightly fobbed off.

## Facilitating Great Sandy Strait Research

To manage the Research Fund, a Research Oversight Committee (ROC) was established by the three partners. The ROC will determine appropriate projects and consider what will give them *'the best bang for their bucks.'* The ROC will make allocations accordingly.

The ROC is also committed to the raising additional funds through donations and fundraising activities. FIDO's Great Sandy Strait Cruises are part of that program.

The ROC aims to promote STEM student and community engagement in environmental studies. There are insufficient resources to engage professional environmental scientists, which is why the ROC is encouraging aspiring scientists to take up the challenge. The ROC is prepared to meet a variety of expenses to enable applicants to gather data and produce a report.

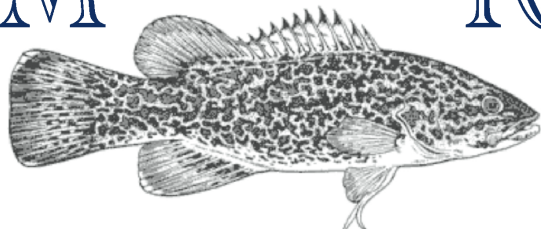
The ROC is also keen to encourage as much participation from the Fraser and Sunshine Coasts as possible because Great Sandy Strait is one of the greatest natural treasures of the region and it is likely to be considered for World Heritage listing in 2019.

In January 2018 invitations were sent out to 40 high schools and colleges between Caloundra and Childers alerting them to the funds. The call for bids for the funds though isn't limited just to those schools. It is open to any STEM students or groups of students to make a bid. This will encourage more practical application of their STEM teaching to examining the flow and water chemistry of the lower Mary River and Great Sandy Strait

## Tax Deductible Donations

**The MARY CATCHMENT PUBLIC FUND** was established in 2005 to raise funds for actions which will help to improve the condition of the Mary River Catchment. To receive your receipt, please fill out the form below and return it to the MRCCC at the address provided, or send an email to [admin@mrccc.org.au](mailto:admin@mrccc.org.au) with details of your donation. Funds may be directly deposited as follows: **BSB: 645-646 Account No: 105536660** Account Name: Mary Catchment Public Fund when paying by bank transfer please include the reference: (donators name) + FIDO

MARY RIVER



C A T C H M E N T  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE

