

## Pest Management on Fraser Island

The Draft Pest Management Strategy for Fraser Island released by the QPWS in February is one of the most positive developments on the management of Fraser Island's natural resources since the adoption of the Fire Management Plan a few years ago.

FIDO immediately copied the list of the 45 top identified pests and had them bound into small durable handbooks and guides for volunteers who may be working on weed removal in the future (and we hope to see a team of Sydney bush regenerators there in October). We thank the QPWS contributors for all of the great work they have put in. While FIDO may have some quibbles about the priorities which should be given to some of the identified pests (and indeed whether some on the list are pests at all), this is a very welcome and very positive foundation. FIDO now plans to work constructively with the QPWS to (a) improve the strategy in some areas and (b) to help implement the strategy.

**Feral Pig/s:** The strategy also included advice that there was a feral pig on the island which was news to FIDO. This is a really worrying revelation. Although there have been sightings of the pig reported to the QPWS over a few years, they have never previously advised Fraser Island stakeholders.

**Three Areas Needing More Detail:** FIDO's main concern is that the Strategy currently focusses on how to address the pests which are already on Fraser Island, but that it does not give enough attention to the spread of these pests and stopping the introduction of further scourges which threaten its natural integrity. FIDO wants more action to deal with this growing problem of pests by:

1. **Preventing** further introductions of potential pests. Many pests were introduced innocently because people were unaware of the potential adverse environmental impacts of their introductions. Quarantine advice at embarkation points should place particular emphasis on potentially horrific introductions such as rabbits, goats or some very virulent weeds and on how innocent introductions might come in through potted plants and earth moving equipment.
2. **Isolating** some existing pests to stop them spreading any further around the island, and
3. **Community engagement** to help address Fraser Island's pest problems. If the public isn't aware of the serious impact of weeds and feral animals, they can't be expected to assist. The Revised Strategy needs to elaborate more on the role that interpretation and public education should play in dealing with pests. The Draft didn't discuss ways to achieve greater community and local government involvement.

FIDO will continue to engage with the QPWS to strengthen the Draft Pest Management Strategy to ensure that the island's natural integrity is maintained. Maintaining integrity is one of Australia's World Heritage obligations. There is already talk that QPWS may insist on pest free declarations before any earth-moving machinery is brought onto the island in the future. However, there is still no action in the Strategy to prevent the release of insects or soil pests and other pathogens or potential pests which may hitchhike to the island. This could be achieved by stopping plants of any sort being taken to the island without a proper clearance. There is nothing to prevent people taking plants like Rubber Vine, *Mimosa pigra* or other noxious pests to the island to plant it in their gardens. **Most of the pests on the list were originally planted in people's gardens.**

### Fraser Island's Top 25 Pests

1 - bitou bush, 2 - Easter cassia, 3 - mother-of-millions, 4 - fox-tail asparagus, 5 - mother-of-millions (hybrid), 6 - ferny asparagus, 7 - Singapore daisy, 8 - groundsel bush, 9 - Madeira vine, 10 - leucaena, 11 - velvety pest pear, 12 - Queensland umbrella tree, 13 - glory lily, 14 - common pest pear, 15 - sisal hemp, 16 - Chinese burr, 17 - lantana, 18 - blue morning glory, 19 - siratro, 20 - camphor laurel, 21 - broad-leaf pepper tree, 22 - mile-a-minute, 23 - molasses grass, 24 - mother-in-law's tongue, 25 - corky passion flower.

**Animals:** Almost all of the top 45 pests are weeds. It seems that their ranking is based on their perniciousness and the difficulty in eradication combined with their invasive properties. However there are five animals: Brumby is 26; mosquito fish is 29; feral dog is 34 and feral pig is 37. FIDO was very surprised to learn that there are feral dogs on Fraser Island. FIDO considers that cane toads and feral cats are serious and unfortunate omissions and that these pests and feral bees should not be ignored.

**Grasses are major invaders:** There are several grasses which didn't make the Top 45 or even the Top 150 in the Draft Strategy. FIDO considers that grasses such as Green Panic should be considered as major problem pests because they are spread so easily and can be very invasive elsewhere in Australia

**Lantana:** Although it comes only 17<sup>th</sup> on the QPWS "Top 45" list of Fraser Island Pests, Lantana tops the list of South East Queensland's most invasive environmental weeds and is one of the most destructive weeds in Australia, costing around \$22 million in control costs and lost production - and much more in terms of environmental costs. Left unchecked, lantana will spread quickly, forming dense thickets that smother and kill native vegetation.

**Tree Removal Obstacle:** Although Easter Cassia (No.2) Umbrella Trees (No.14) and broad-leafed pepper tree (No.23) are listed in the Top 45, FIDO and other volunteers still need to run through the hoops of the Queensland bureaucracy to get a "Tree Removal Permit" before we are able to eliminate these virulent weeds because they are not deemed to be noxious weeds statewide.



McKenzie's Sawmill 1920

Logs were unloaded from the locos on the uphill side and milled with the sawn timbers stacked on the downhill side from where they were taken by locomotives out on to the jetty to be shipped to Sydney where they were distributed through Hector McKenzie's outlets