



MOONBI 119

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 118

Since MOONBI 118 went to press last November, Fraser Island has been the subject of many news items and has been affected by a range of events including a State election. However, it would be foolish to imagine that Fraser Island is now better off when considering the sum of events affecting it. While the environment didn't even warrant an election policy statement from the Liberal National Party, the Queensland Labor Government was sitting on its hands even when asked to do something they should have been doing for the past twelve years monitoring the Fraser Island environment to ensure that it wasn't degrading. Some relevant aspects of the political scene are on page 2.

The Lakes: Fraser Island's perched dune lakes are icons and one of its most conspicuous World Heritage values. They are unique because for thousands of years there has been an equilibrium between the precipitation on the lake surfaces and evaporation. This balance has been changed by the roads now extending the lake catchments and pouring megalitres of extra water into the lakes with the sediment and pollutants that goes with such volumes. Even when evidence was presented that the lakes were significantly degrading the Queensland Parks and Wildlife was steadfastly refusing to undertake any monitoring unless someone else paid for it. The Minister's failure to order some immediate action was outrageous and subsequently the Minister was voted out of Parliament by his Hervey Bay electorate. See story on page 2.

However, the state of the lakes is only one of the areas where Fraser Island is in decline.

The Fatalities: It takes a death or two to get political action on Fraser Island. The death of two backpackers on 18th April certainly focused to Queensland political mind on one of the many things on Fraser Island that needs urgent attention. While the immediate response was to reduce the speed limit on the beach to 80 kph FIDO believes there has to be a lot more done to prevent inexperienced drivers taking the wheel

The Conference: On the positive scene FIDO's third Biennial Conference has attracted international speakers. FIDO's first conference was in Noosa, the second was at the University of the Sunshine Coast. This one, "Shifting Sands", will be held at the **Walkabout Creek Conference Centre, Brisbane on Friday 24th July, 2009.** Details of this event are on P 3. This Conference promises to be at least as interesting and exciting as the others compressed into a single day of insight and useful information.

Dingoes: The issue of Fraser Island dingo management has been intensely hyped up in the media by animal welfare enthusiasts. FIDO has made a considered response. Page 5

Lakes crisis demands urgent action: The steadfast refusal of the Queensland Government to carry out what should be a core responsibility in a National Park such as Fraser Island to monitor the water quality of the lakes and the casual indifference of the Commonwealth Government to its World Heritage responsibilities has left FIDO no alternative but to ask that Fraser Island be added to the World Heritage in Danger List. See story & background on pages 6-8.

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 members and supporters to add weight to its submissions and to help meet campaign expenses, to undertake projects, and to pursue research to improve Fraser Island management.

Backgrounders: With this MOONBI FIDO includes two backgrounders first published over 20 years ago when FIDO was collecting oral histories from some of the pioneers and traditional owners of Fraser Island. Sid Jarvis had bullock teams on Fraser Island from 1918 to 1929 and Ike Owens was intimately involved with Fraser Island from 1931 to 1977. Their recollections provide some sort of benchmark of what life on Fraser Island was like almost a century ago. FIDO believes it is vital to have a corporate memory of Fraser Island and these backgrounders help to provide that.



The start of DM Minerals sandmining operations 1975

Photos in MOONBI 119 come from FIDO's photographic archive. FIDO is happy to make these images available to any group free.

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Political Developments

The State Elections have resulted in some changes in the Queensland political landscape but there remains an need to improve the state's environmental management. Resource exploitation, particularly the resources of the natural environment, appears to be unsustainable as the state pursues economic growth. At the time of writing there is little to indicate that this is about to change in the re-elected Bligh Government.

The State Political Scene

A Fresh Environment Minister: The appointment of the youngest Cabinet Minister, 29 year old Kate Jones to look after "green" environmental issues and the appointment of Stephen Robertson to deal with the "brown" environmental issues and bringing both portfolios into one super department called DERM (Department of Environment and Resource Management) are the major developments so far announced for the new Bligh Government. The Environmental Protection Agency has been absorbed into the new department that also deals with forest issues, water resources and land management. The word "*Environment*" still doesn't appear in any ministerial title. Kate Jones is the Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change and Stephen Robertson is Minister for Natural Resources. However looming over the Queensland environment is the Infrastructure department.

McNamara's Loss: The former Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation and the member representing Fraser Island in the Queensland Parliament Andrew McNamara lost his seat. This is no surprise and most analyses agree that his failure to do enough to protect the local environment was a major contributor including the unacceptable environmental impacts of the Traveston Crossing Dam on Great Sandy Strait and Hervey Bay, and the failure to do enough to protect the icons of Fraser Island such as its lakes even refusing a request to undertake the minimum monitoring to establish the water quality after 12 years of doing nothing. FIDO was surprised to be confronted by any lack of response by the then Minister McNamara to the appalling revelation of his environment department's abdication from its responsibilities to protect Fraser Island.

Traveston Crossing Dam: Having seen the Bligh government now not representing any electorate between Caboolture and Rockhampton one would have thought that this would call for a rethink in a policy that cost them so dearly, the decision to build the Traveston Crossing Dam. However, the Queensland Premier still insists on pushing forward with this project. It is doubtful in economic terms, seemingly more difficult in engineering terms and devastating in environmental terms. The Rudd Government may save the Queensland Government's face by declining to approve this on environmental grounds.

A conservative environmental agenda: The total absence of an environmental policy by the Liberal National Party as the alternative government not only cost them dearly in political terms but it also meant that Labor didn't have any competition in this area except from the Greens. That meant that the environment had little traction as an election issue in 2009. Already the environmental movement is working to put the environment as the forefront in the next Queensland state election by making sure that the two alternative governments in Queensland have strong policies and commitment to environmental protection.

The Secrecy Shroud: The lack of transparency in the operations of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife have finally forced FIDO to resort to pursue a Freedom of Information request to obtain information on the Site Visitor Capacity study carried out with considerable voluntary input by community members. FIDO is hoping that the new Minister will break down the wall of silence and lack of open communication between the bureaucracy and the public and community groups.



QTM sandmining rehabilitation Fraser Island 1973

The Federal Scene

The Federal Government must accept a major part of the responsibility for the declining situation on Fraser Island. While it has delegated the day-to-day management of the Fraser Island World Heritage property to the Queensland Government it wasn't supposed to wash its hands entirely of any responsibility to see that a proper and adequate management regime to protect the World Heritage values was in place.

- a. **Funding:** For some incomprehensible reason while the Federal member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss, was Primary Industries Minister and had a key role in approving the distribution of Federal funds for environmental causes, Fraser Island was starved for funds. That deliberate neglect has continued so far in the term of the Rudd Government. A comparison of the amount of funding contributed by the Feds to Lord Howe Island (millions of dollars per annum for a 1500ha island and the \$60,000 for the 167,000ha Fraser Island) demonstrates the degree of iniquity in the distribution of Federal funds. Queensland may have a responsibility to manage Fraser Island as a National Park but the Feds have a responsibility to ensure there is adequate funding to protect the World Heritage values.
- b. **Monitoring:** It is not the Queensland Government alone that is responsible for protecting Fraser Island's World Heritage values and it is staggering that the Canberra bureaucracy was so unaware of Queensland's failure to monitor water quality in the lakes. It is indicative of a total Pontius Pilate view prevailing in Canberra and that is contributing to the decline of Fraser Island.

FIDO's Fraser Island Shifting Sands Conference

Walkabout Creek Conference Centre, The Gap, Brisbane

9.00 am to 5.00 pm — Friday 24th July 2009

The Third Fraser Island Defenders Organisation Biennial Fraser Island Conference will provide constructive new insights into Fraser Island. A galaxy of highly regarded speakers will present papers focusing on some of the issues where a better understanding of the science is vital to improving management.

It is hoped that Queensland Environment Minister, Hon Kate Jones, will be open the Conference. She has just announced a further push to enlarge the Fraser Island World Heritage area to include Cooloola.

Keynote Speaker is distinguished coastal geomorphologist and eminent academic Prof Bruce Thom. He is a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists and Emeritus Professor, University of Sydney. His expertise extends to all aspects of coastal management and coastal land use planning. In 1975 he said that *Fraser Island is to the sandmasses of the world what the Great Barrier Reef is to the world's coral reefs*.

Patterns of recreation is the theme for the conference's morning session. This deals with critical issues such as carrying capacity for Fraser Island and its more popular sites, especially Lake McKenzie, and getting more people walking on Fraser Island as an alternative to 4WDs.

"Carrying Capacity – Meaningless or Mandatory: Prospects for Fraser Island" will be addressed by Dr Terry Brown from Griffith University and a member of the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee who was a member of the Fraser Island SVC Working Group.

Walking Trails and walkers huts and shelters raises a number of controversial issues for Queensland National Parks. Greg Carter a former Queensland park ranger and a walker of Fraser Island's Great Walk now manages visitor & Historic assets in a New Zealand National Park and will discuss ways and will discuss role and benefits of huts and shelters on multi-day walks.

Perched dune lake management is to be the focus of Dr. Wade Hadwen's paper. He has particularly studied patterns of recreation at Lake McKenzie and looks at the implications for it in a paper titled *"Perched lakes as focal tourism and recreation destinations on Fraser Island: Impacts and management implications"*.



Due to the Queensland Government's stance, Eli Creek became very severely degraded. The trampling of the banks and the intrusion of campers had made the creek wider and shallower and destroyed the riparian vegetation. In 1981 FIDO decided to build a boardwalk to protect this fragile site. Without any government support and with volunteers over a period of 18 weekends and at a cost of materials that almost broke FIDO, Fraser Island's first boardwalk was constructed.

The very affordable cost is \$40 for FIDO members and \$60 for non-FIDO members. (The fee for non-members includes a one year subscription to MOONBI) Registration can be paid at the door. Credit card facilities are available. The cost includes morning and afternoon tea but not lunch. Lunch can be bought at the cafeteria at the conference centre.

Natural Resource Management: The afternoon session is focused on natural resource management of Fraser Island addressing some of the more vexed and intractable issues impacting on Fraser Island — Climate change, dingo management and fire management.

Sandblow Study and Climate: Israeli geomorphologist, Dr Noam Levin, has studied active dune areas (sandblows) from air photos of Fraser Island taken over the past 60 years as well as the climatic records from Sandy Cape Lighthouse. He has concluded that if the present trends continue, it is probable that most of Fraser Island's sand blows will become stabilized during the 21st century.

Dingo Management: Adam O'Neill, author of *"Living with the Dingo"* and his colleague, Dr Arian D. Wallach will present a paper highlighting the importance of the natural dingo family structure and how disruption of pack stability also alters population demographics can result in changed behaviour and aggression.

Fire management: Following on from FIDO's Second Conference, Queensland's leading fire ecologist, Peter Stanton, will discuss problems identified are related to the long term exclusion of fire, resulting in widespread destabilisation of the island's habitats, with unforeseeable but potentially disastrous consequences. Peter was the author of Fraser Island's first Management Plan in 1975. He continues to take an active interest in Fraser Island's management. and documenting Fraser Island's unique environment and its management.

FIDO preceded any part of Fraser Island becoming a National Park or a World Heritage site. FIDO proudly continues its role in identifying the island's values and the biennial conferences improve our understanding.

Conference abstracts, program and news can be found at: www.fido.org.au



In 1981 FIDO embarked on an unauthorized entirely voluntary project to arrest the degradation of Eli Creek and to let it regain some of its former integrity by constructing a boardwalk over 18 weekends and at a very significant financial cost for the organization

What is Driving Fraser Island?

At 7.30 am on 18th April, 2009 two young people were killed and 9 others were injured, several very seriously at 7.30 am when the troopie they were travelling in with other foreign backpackers, rolled over and over for 50 metres along the Fraser Island beach, 9.2 kilometres north of Dundubara.

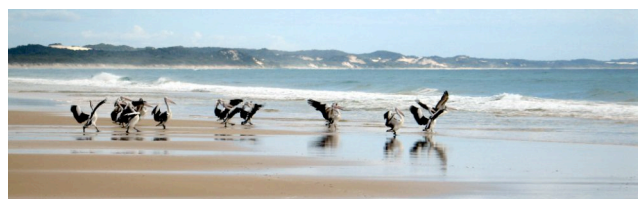
It was a fatal tragedy that added yet another call to the taxpayer subsidised medical emergency services to evacuate nine seriously injured backpackers to mainland hospitals. This single vehicle accident has sparked a public outcry that the Queensland Government address what has been an obvious problem for Fraser Island management for years.

Accidents involving backpacker driven troopies on Fraser Island have been occurring with regularity for years. They have been ignored by the Queensland Government for just as long. The state doesn't want to disrupt the cash flow backpackers inject into the Queensland economy and particularly the regional economy of the Fraser and Cooloola Coast. The Queensland Government has ignored calls that overseas residents should have to show some form of competency before they took to driving a heavily loaded three tonne vehicle with a centre of gravity higher than they would be familiar with in one of the world's most testing environments of a driver's skills.

\$\$s not sense: The fact that the drivers are also responsible for up to 10 passengers that make up the usual complement of a backpacker's party seems to have also been overlooked by those who are more concerned about keeping the economy growing than they are on how much the Queensland Government is spending on emergency services when the inexperienced drivers are involved in tragic accidents.

The "Sunday Mail" reported that there have been more than 120 serious motor vehicle accidents on Fraser Island since 2003. The report failed to note that a disproportionate number of those accidents that involve backpacker driven 4WD "Troopies". Following the second "Sunday Mail" editorial the Queensland Government lowered the speed limit on the beach to 80 kilometres per hour. This is an improvement on the previous position. **Reduced speed limits won't stop troopies with inexperienced drivers rolling over. — They just won't roll as fast or as far as in April's fatal accident.** What is needed more urgently is that drivers of troopies have adequate 4WD driving experience.

FIDO's position: MOONBI has reported on these accidents for years and FIDO has been making submissions to the Queensland Government to better regulate and manage the backpacker traffic to Fraser Island. For years the CAC has been advised that action to treat backpacker tour packages as commercial tours was imminent. That would mean that regulations applying to all other commercial tour operators would apply to backpackers and require an experienced guide/leader for each group. FIDO remains mystified why this proposal has now been stalled for years.



Just to quote some of the reports from past MOONBIs:

July 2003 From MOONBI 83 — *Two British backpackers aged 18 and 19 were charged with dangerous driving after rolling their 4WD while doing "donuts" on Fraser Island's beach just south of Eli Creek. There were seven tourists of different nationalities aboard the vehicle when it rolled (involving emergency medical evacuation)*

FIDO then said: *This is only one of many vehicle accidents involving backpackers who don't have to sit for a driving test to drive on Australian roads (or Fraser Island). The Queensland Government bears the cost of the medical evacuation and treatment of all Fraser Island accident casualties.*



McKenzie's sawmill operations 1918-1922. Logs were delivered to the top of the mill (right of photo) by locomotives, processed into sawn timber that emerged at the bottom of the mill (left) to be conveyed to McKenzies Jetty by locomotives

June 2005: From MOONBI 105 — *Nine backpackers had to be flown to hospital after their 4WD troop carrier rolled on a sharp bend near Wanggoolba Creek and Central Station. Fraser Island police said the 4WD had been travelling around the hairpin bend at high speed when it flipped, injuring the nine occupants.*

A similar accident occurred on March 2 when a 4WD flipped near Eurong Beach on Fraser Island, injuring seven backpackers. Police said backpackers frequently got into trouble on the island. The 24 y.o. English male driver was charged with driving without due care and attention.

Sgt Mooney from the Fraser Island police station said that no special licence was required to drive a 4WD. He added, "Generally it's just inexperience. The 4WDs are top heavy with two gear sticks. A lot of the young backpackers just aren't used to handling these kinds of vehicles."

A spokesman for 4WD hire company said local operators were meeting to address the problems associated with the hire of the off-roaders on the island. (Four years later nothing has changed and the 4WD hire companies keep stalling on anything that might affect their bottom lines).

A federal Parliamentary Committee on road safety has recommended that there should be special licences for 4WDs in view of the number of serious accidents they are involved in but it is up to the statistics to implement this

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This time the Queensland Government must respond in a more positive way. It should implement the recommendations of Federal Parliamentary Committee and introduce special licences for 4WDs or at least the 4WDs that give the most trouble namely Troop carriers that become unstable and unsafe when fully loaded.

FIDO agrees with the Fraser Island Association president, Col Pearce, who says that reducing the speed limits on Fraser Island is only part of the problem.

FIDO's proposal. *Because the vehicles that are predominantly involved in serious accidents on Fraser Island are top-heavy troop-carriers (usually with roof racks or overhead luggage compartments) with up to 10 passengers (and most usually driven by an inexperienced foreign backpacker unfamiliar with Fraser Island conditions FIDO proposes: That a special driving licence be required to drive any 4WD bus.*

All troop-carriers capable of carrying eight (8) passengers in the back (i.e. those with side facing bench seats) are classified as "buses" in Queensland. This would immediately eliminate all but qualified and experienced backpacker drivers taking the wheel of "troopies". Not all "troopies" though are "buses" so the number of licences that would need to be issued isn't so big. This proposal would still allow any qualified drivers including backpackers to still be able to hire smaller 4WD vehicles that might carry up to five passengers. Such vehicles are generally much more stable than troopies even when fully loaded. Troopies will still be able be hired by backpackers as long as they have appropriately qualified drivers.

Fraser Island Dingo Management

Some of the fewer than 100 island residents have now formed a Fraser Island Dingo Preservation Group. This groups seems to be opposed to the current Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy and particularly the culling of dingoes that exhibit aggressive behaviour to humans. Between 20th April and 5th May 2001 28 Dingoes were shot in an immediate political knee-jerk response to the death of Clinton Gage. Another 50 dingoes were shot up to 3 July 2007. The rate of dingoes being shot has now fallen to fewer than five per annum.

FIDO's Position: While the culling of dingoes is regrettable FIDO doesn't see the present Dingo Management Strategy as endangering the health and sustainability of the overall Fraser Island dingo population. This is because:

1. The dingoes exhibiting aggressive behaviour towards humans are already outcasts from the pack. Because they are outcasts and don't hunt with a pack they get less to eat than the dingoes within the pack. Their hunger and lack of any territory turns them into lean and hungry opportunists that hang around any human settlement in the hope of scavenging some food. Thus the dingoes most frequently seen by Fraser Island visitors are miserable beggars usually in poor condition. These outcasts are weaker dogs that will either starve to death or be killed by other dingoes because they intrude on an established pack's territory. It is usually these animals that are culled.
2. Every year following the whelping Fraser Island has a dingo population of approximately 200 animals. The dingo population needs to fall to about 100 animals before the next lot of pups are born to make way for the next generation. There are usually many more of these problem animals just after the pups are weaned and when mating occurs. This is why most attacks and most dingoes are destroyed in April-May.
3. Every year there is a natural attrition of about 100 dingoes that either die of hunger, are killed by fellow dingoes because of intrusion or are shot because of their aggressive behaviour. That means less than 5% of the

annual attrition can be attributed to the current culling program.

4. The current rate of culling is not disrupting the structure of the packs. It is important that the pack situation of the island is not disrupted as it was when the initial cull took out some alpha male dogs. The situation is now almost stabilized as the roles are determined. The few (2-3) animals now shot each year are not dogs that have any role in the established packs.
5. The dingo fences around the township could have been constructed with better consultation but the overall position is that the dingoes are being separated from humans and they are less likely to be habituated both because people now find it harder to feed them and because the dingoes can't prowl around the houses occasionally gaining opportunistically available scraps.
6. While residents may resent being fenced in the safety of the public is being dramatically improved. This has been attested to by the volunteer FIDO weeders who have been working in Happy Valley and Eurong before and since the fences became operative. Residents represent a very small number (less than 100 people) and the most vulnerable people are island visitors. Over 300,000 visiting the townships and settlements annually and spend a significant amount of time there. With the townships fenced they are no longer under constant alert to lurking dingoes.
7. Although the grids are yet to be fine-tuned and not always working, dingoes having been shocked once, like domestic grazing livestock, are still very wary and keep well clear of the grids even when they are not electrified.

Neglect and degradation of Fraser's lakes and streams

In November 2008 the Queensland Parks and Wildlife was finally reluctantly forced to admit that there had n't been no monitoring of the water quality of any of Fraser Island's lakes since 1997. It wasn't just that they had been doing any chemical analysis of the waters of lakes like Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) that attracts in excess of 1000 visitors a day, there just hadn't even been any monitoring of any sort.

FIDO has been reporting since August that it was alarmed at the state of Lake Allom that had become visibly cloudier as a result of the heavier inflow of road run-off during the 2007-08 La Nina event.

Conservationists are outraged that the Queensland Government has neglected the World Heritage listed Fraser Island to such an extent that for it has failed to carry out even the most basic monitoring of Fraser Island's most iconic natural resources for over 12 years (and the time without monitoring continues to extend). This is indicative of a complacent and uncaring administration. The wanton neglect of Fraser Island's lakes for over a decade is just one example of the Queensland Government's poor management resulting in Australia not meeting its obligations under the World Heritage convention.

While chemical analysis is tricky and expensive some monitoring tests like readings of turbidity require little expertise and negligible cost and can help indicate algal blooms or the presence of colloids.

The Queensland Government needs to urgently lift its game if it is to continue to be entrusted with the island's day-to-day management.

When FIDO confronted the then Queensland Environment Minister about the appalling neglect of this great natural asset (located entirely within his own electorate) FIDO was casually dismissed not with an assurance that this neglect would be immediately rectified, but with that if (and only if) the Queensland Government was successful in its Caring for Country application for funds from the Federal Government it would commence to resume monitoring. This effectively meant the best he was offering was that some data collection may begin in September at the earliest but it may not begin at all.

Fraser's toilets take precedence over lakes

The irony of the refusal to monitor the lakes is in contrast with the QPW's obsession with collecting other data such as toilet movements. Few people would be aware that every time they shut a National Park toilet door on Fraser Island they trigger an electronic counter. These counters aren't just restricted to toilet doors. Electronic sensors are even placed above urinals so that the number of users can be counted. FIDO is asking what becomes of all of the data collected especially as there is such a queue to get into the toilet at Lake McKenzie where for the last five years there have been only three pedestals to cope with the needs of many times over 1000 visitors per day. It is one thing to have statistics on toilet use if the data is useful and helps improve management but nobody needs to see any data collection to know that the toilet capacity at Lake McKenzie is woefully inadequate and it is so obvious that additional capacity is long overdue.

FIDO thinks there needs to be more focus on collecting data on the health of the lakes and much less priority given to counting the number of toilet users.

Fraser Island is included in Queensland's top ten natural destinations, and figures very highly in countless international surveys of the greatest natural destinations globally during the last decade. However, if nothing is urgently done to stop the degradation of Fraser Island's greatest icons, then it's tourist drawcard value could dramatically decline as a with an adverse impact on the regional economy.

In 2002 Klienhardt FGI, Cairns based corporate consultants, established that Fraser Island generated \$277M annually to the economy and most of this benefitted the regional economy. However the goose that lays this golden egg is being plucked for every feather it can yield without the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments acting to protect and preserve those tourist icons that have made Fraser Island such an enormous drawcard and national asset.

This is best demonstrated by the failure of either government to protect the most precious icon of all in economic terms, Lake McKenzie. Not only have neither government monitored the quality of the water in this lake that was once claimed by scientists to be the freshest naturally occurring water in the world, but they continue to allow road runoff to pour into this magical lake carrying with it sediments and pollutants.

Of course by failing to test the water quality they have been able to turn a blind eye to this lake's degradation and therefore claim that since they haven't seen any evidence of degradation they can avoid taking action to address this most obvious problem.



The road beside Lake McKenzie is dramatically enlarging the catchment for this iconic lake much to the detriment of the lake. Only some of the sediment is caught in this primitive and ineffective silt trap before the water flows into the lake carrying with it chemicals and colloids that are altering the character of the lake.

The neglect of Lake McKenzie is best epitomized by the failure to provide more than three toilet pedestals for the thousand plus people that may visit it on any one day. This problem for years has been shrugged off with a claim, "There is no money to fix it".

The Significance of Fraser's Lakes

The perched dune lakes of Fraser Island are amongst its most significant World Heritage values. This is because:

- 1. Perched dune lakes are known to occur only in the dunes of south eastern Queensland.** They are the result of chemical precipitation of organic colloids within the water cementing the space between the sand grains to create a watertight basin. Most other dune lakes in the world are window lakes. There are steep hydraulic gradients between a number of the "perched" lakes and adjacent areas with lower elevation. **Fraser Island has more than 90% of the perched dune lakes on the globe.**
- 2. Some perched dune lakes have developed their own unique dune systems** around them including lunettes, blowouts and embryonic parabolic dunes.
- 3. They are special because of the quality of the water contained within them.** As early as the 1970's scientists had identified them as having some of the freshest water occurring in a natural water body anywhere in the world. In chemical terms it was found to be fresher than rain water.
- 4. The lakes are highly oligotrophic, containing very small quantities of nutrients** (due to the infertile sands around them), are well oxygenated, with very dilute (average salinity 40mg/L) acidic waters (pH=6.0 - 4.0) containing high proportions of allochthonous organic material.
- 5. Perched dune lakes have unique fauna.** Limited photosynthesis, coupled with low concentrations of nutrients, results in low secondary productivity, and perhaps also in low biotic diversity. However, the fauna has distinctive characteristics and there are at least 12 unique species. (See adjacent column).
- 6. The water level of the lakes is maintained by a relative equilibrium between evaporation and precipitation.** In most of the perched dune lakes there is no catchment extending more than 50 metres from the lake shore. (Lake Boomanjin is a notable exception being fed by three small streams.)

Four of the above identified values of perched dune lakes are put at risk through the unnatural road runoff flowing into the lakes.

- * Road run-off is changing the natural equilibrium that once existed between rainfall and precipitation. Thus Lake Allom is able to fill much faster.
- * Road runoff carries sediment and this is changing geomorphic characteristics and this will result in the lakes "aging" (by prematurely filling with sand) and becoming shallower (or as has already happened to Yidney Lake becoming dry land and supporting a forest of large blackbutt trees).
- * The inflow with pollutants from the road wash will change the chemical composition and the unique water quality that was initially so applauded.
- * The fauna may be threatened by the chemical changes resulting from any unnatural in-flow.

It is imperative that the Queensland Government immediately begin to monitor the water quality of Fraser Island's perched dune lakes.

Fauna of Fraser's Perched Dune Lakes

The invertebrate fauna of the perched dune lakes is low in both diversity and numbers when compared with other freshwater lakes, but is of great scientific interest. Researchers discovered a new genus of insect in Fraser Island's lakes. The sub-family Aphroteminae had previously only been known from South Africa and the tip of South America. The most primitive Chironomid (Diptera) larva yet known in the world occurs in great abundance in the fine sands from Lake Boomanjin on Fraser Island. Another distinctive and related midge species occurs only in Lake Wabby (*Paralauterborniella*). Studies of the affinities of these insects has enhanced knowledge of southern Gondwanan biogeography. The absence or rarity of groups which are usually common in freshwater lakes (planarians, ostracods, planktonic cladocera, amphipods and molluscs) also distinguishes the dune lakes as unusual and a distinct class. At least twelve new species of invertebrates have been found in the dune lakes (Insecta, Cladocera, an oligochaete worm). Even among the highly mobile dragonflies there are two species unique to the dune lakes. Other invertebrates occur in abundance only in these lakes, among them the zooplanktonic copepod *Calamoecia tasmanica*.

From "Discovering Fraser Island and Cooloola"



This inflow of road run-off into Lake Allom is having a most significant adverse environmental impact yet the QPW still steadfastly refuses to carry out its core responsibility of monitoring water quality unless some other body, (the Commonwealth Government) pay for it. In the meantime the Commonwealth Government have been totally indifferent to the neglectful management the Queensland Government is applying to Fraser Island.

Back in October 2008 when QPW revealed that it was considering closing Basin Lake for swimming because of the visible decline in water quality, it still wasn't admitting that it had failed to monitor the water quality in any of Fraser Island's lakes since 1997.

FIDO believes that two other lakes, Lake McKenzie and Lake Allom, are also in serious decline because of the storm-water runoff from the roads flowing into both lakes carrying tonnes of sediments and pollutants during every downpour. FIDO identified the protection of Fraser Island's lakes in its published list of urgent actions to protect World Heritage values in 2003. These and other actions urged by FIDO have been totally disregarded.

Fraser Island for World Heritage in Danger List

In the six months since the Queensland Government's contemptuous neglect to carry out its core responsibilities on Fraser Island have been revealed, neither the Australian nor Queensland Governments has moved to immediately address the issue and establish what is currently the state of health of Fraser Island's lakes now. This is despite the fact that up to 1000 people visit Lake McKenzie on many days of the year. In view of this FIDO has now drawn this matter to the urgent attention of the IUCN (World Conservation Union) and the World Heritage Committee and asked that consideration now be given to placing it on the World Heritage in Danger List.

Monitoring of important natural values should be regarded as the core business of any Australian National Park agency. Why then is the Queensland Government refusing to carry out its core National Park business unless the Commonwealth Government pays for it?

The neglect of Fraser Island's lakes epitomizes many of management's failings in the 16 years since Fraser Island was placed on the World Heritage List. The island is now in worse shape than it was in 1991 when the Fitzgerald Inquiry reported and logging ceased. The Queensland Government is responsible for the care of Fraser Island, but although the island generates over \$250M for the national economy, mostly in Queensland, it has failed to protect the outstanding

and universal World Heritage values as is required under the World Heritage convention.

The Queensland Government needs to urgently lift its game. If Queensland Parks and Wildlife can't manage Fraser Island properly the island should be passed to another agency to manage it. If the island's World Heritage values are not being properly protected then Fraser Island won't be worth keeping on the World Heritage list.

FIDO has spent 40 years trying to get the island's outstanding values properly recognized. FIDO isn't now prepared to idly sit by while lazy or incompetent bureaucrats allow Fraser Island to run to rack and ruin.

Fraser Farcical Wild River Status

After discovering just prior to Christmas the grim reality of the QPW's indifference to monitoring the water quality in Fraser Island's lakes and the Environmental Protection Agency's intransigence to undertaking any testing of the water quality before the Commonwealth Government had acquiesced to funding water testing through its "Caring for Country" program, FIDO sought to get some action through the Wild Rivers responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources. Regrettably the prompt but negative response from the then Minister, Craig Wallace, was to absolve his Department of any responsibility. He flick passed the obligation to monitor Fraser Island's lakes back to the Environmental Protection Agency. This circuitous buck-passing means that exactly a year after Fraser Island was gazetted as Queensland's first Wild River instead of adding another layer of protection for Fraser Island's outstanding natural resources, Queensland's Wild Rivers legislation has turned out to be nothing more than a political smoke-screen to gain political kudos for actually doing nothing.

The Wild Rivers declaration on Fraser Island is farcical because although it purports to apply to specified streams and the lake system. It is an abject failure because it fails to protect either Fraser Island's lakes or streams from serious degradation.

Lakes: Fraser Island's lakes are listed in s.4 of Queensland's Wild Rivers legislation Wild river features as (4) The special features of the wild river area citing "(a) the Fraser Island Lake System". It seems from the maps that the lakes are in the 'high preservation area'. The natural values mean .. (e) water quality is the physical, chemical and biological attributes of water that affect its ability to support certain values and uses. "Preserve" means to keep intact or maintain unchanged or as close as practicable in an unaltered state.

FIDO wants to know how can the Queensland Government 'preserve' the 'natural values' of the 'high preservation area' (which the lakes are by the December

2007 declaration) and also a 'special feature' (also by the same nomination) if it fails to monitor the water quality?

Dams and weirs on Fraser Island: Although the Fraser Island wild rivers declaration stated, "*Most types of new development are prohibited in a high preservation area, including in-stream dams and weirs*", the Wild Rivers Branch of what is now DERM (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) has yet to stop the horrific development of weirs on many of the declared Fraser Island streams.

The declaration lists wild river features to which the Act applies. These include Wanggoolba and Boon Boon Creeks that are bridged to carry traffic on roads heavily used by buses. The irony is that that least two Boon Boon Creek crossings have been transformed into weirs by the huge volumes of sediment loosened up by the vehicle traffic and then washed along the down the hills every time there is a downpour. At the bottom of the hill the sand is deposited so much harder than the flow of the stream can shift it and in no time large weirs are built up where the roads cross. On the upstream side of these crossings there are now visible lakes. Weirs are cutting off freshwater biota upstream from those downstream.



128 years of logging changed the structure of Fraser Island's forests from 1863 to 1991

Are Crocodiles Climate's "Bell Wethers?"

During the last summer there were many sightings of crocodiles in Great Sandy Strait. Most sightings were between Garry's Landing to Kingfisher Resort and even from the Urangan Jetty throughout the last summer. This resulted in the Environment Department spending more than \$75,000 in a search for the saurian and erecting crocodile warning signs from Tin Can Bay to Hervey Bay. The sightings were all very credible causing the Environmental Protection Agency to mount a futile attempt to catch an elusive four (?) metre saurian.

In April the Department of Environment advised that its search for a crocodile in Great Sandy Strait was to be scaled back because it was unlikely that the crocodile was still in the area. Crocodile experts suggested that colder weather and colder water would force the crocodile(s) back to warmer climes.

Crocodiles have been reported in the Great Sandy region for over 150 years but they have always been elusive and never numerous and always usually only summer vagrants who have wandered south in search of new territory.

The question remains was this summer of more frequent sightings this far south just a random aberration in Queensland crocodile distribution, or do the sightings provide further evidence that global warming will see essentially animals turning up with ever increasing frequencies in higher latitude and perhaps eventually breeding in the Fraser Coast region.

FIDO thinks that there is other evidence the sea is warming due to other marine creatures turning up much further south of what has hitherto been their normal range.

Irukandji Stingers: Although the tourist industry is attempting to keep the issue away from the public eye for fear of the impacts on their shaky industry, the most qualified marine biologists have already indicated that the small and deadly irukandji jelly fish are already progressively migrating south. While once not reported south of 1770 they have now been positively identified off Fraser Island. They are occurring with increasing frequency in Hervey Bay and are predicted to eventually find their way into Moreton Bay.

A paramedic said that irukandji stings are uncommon in the Great Sandy area but they *happen occasionally*. *Luckily few have required long-term treatment or serious management.*



This was the MV Maheno when it was washed ashore in July, 1935. It is now impossible to take an unobscured photograph from the same angle due to the thick vegetation now cladding the cliffs. The beach is now much wider.

Going against the Drift

A Fraser Explorer tour guide recently discovered a bottle washed up south of Eurong Beach on Fraser Island with a message inside — a faded page from a fisherman's tally pad. However when he held it up to the sun for a few minutes, the writing became clear and read "Latitude - E 148degrees 25 mins 500, Longitude - S 40degrees 48 mins 901". The bottle, he made out, had been dropped into the Pacific Ocean on January 23, 2008, and with the help of a GPS program he calculated that the dropping point was near Eddystone Point, half way between Tasmania and King Island. Fifteen months and almost 1750 kilometres later it had washed up on a random wave at Fraser Island. The bottle had actually defied the north –South East Australian current to travel from Tasmania to Fraser Island.



New Fraser Island Native Title claims

Warrig Fraser Coast Butchulla clans, divided by two 11-year-old Native Title claims, are being urged to unite in the wake of a new Native Title claim involving Fraser Island. So far hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on hearings and debate over differing Butchulla land claims but there has still been no resolution to the dilemma.

The Queensland South Native Title Services called for a two-day discussion in Hervey Bay in May over two new native title applications — one covering the land on and waters around Fraser Island and the other is a large tract of territory that runs from Hervey Bay through to Howard, Maryborough and Bauple.

In 2006 13 Butchulla elders were dumped from the land council making a Native title application to be replaced by younger Butchulla, including some who didn't know they were Butchulla and others who are still trying to prove that they are. A South Native Title Services spokesman said there were a lot of ways for Butchulla to gain monetary value out of registering Native Title.

Fraser Island Commando Training

Anzac Day 2009 allowed WWII veteran Frank Doyle to remember the training he helped to deliver on Fraser Island during WWII. The former amateur boxer signed up for the army in 1939 at age 18 to "help keep the country free" and went on to become one of the legendary Rats of Tobruk before given the tough role of training army commandos to fight the Japanese in the treacherous jungles of Papua New Guinea. He was stationed at a top secret training facility on Fraser Island and for two years trained the army's best.

Fraser Island figured largely in the top-secret training that about 900 men underwent at the Fraser Island commando school between 1942 and 1946. The training for Z Force involved parachute jumping, caving and horse-riding.



These Japanese glass fishing floats once regularly washed up on Fraser Island. They are now rareities

The Results of Wild Weather

While SEQ's wild wet weather over the last summer and autumn poured gigalitres of road wash containing tonnes of sand into Fraser Island's precious perched lakes, the same events have stripped millions of tonnes of sand off Fraser Island's ocean beaches exposing rocks that are the remnants of old dunes lake beds. These "rocks" have been buried under metres of sand for years and now make some beach sections untrafficable. At Easter it took a long inland detour simply to get between Eurong and Happy Valley. The weather and the treats of a force five cyclone (Hamish) have resulted in periodic closures, to the inconvenience and annoyance of some campers.

\$ Values of World Heritage

A study of 15 of Australia's World Heritage properties' contribution to the national, regional and local economies has reinforced the findings of an independent study commissioned by FIDO in 2002. At the regional level, the 15 World Heritage Areas (WHAs) are estimated to contribute: \$7,011.4 million in annual direct and indirect regional output or business turnover; \$3,135.0 million in annual direct and indirect regional value added; \$2,117.3 million in direct and indirect regional household income; and 42,873 direct and indirect regional jobs. Queensland's Wet Tropics and Sydney's Opera House are the two most significant WHAs in terms of economic impact. The Tasmanian Wilderness, Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building, Fraser Island and the Gondwana Rainforests are the next most significant group.

A table was included showing contributions of Management of Visitors to the regional state and national economies, separate from the impact of visitors to the same, as well as how this related to employment. FIDO was interested in comparing Fraser Island with Lord Howe Island, both islands are World Heritage sites although the volumes of visitation to Lord Howe Island is less than 10% of visitation to Fraser Island.

	Fraser Island	Lord Howe
Impact management to income	\$24.4M	\$27.5M
Impact of Visitors to Income	\$591.1M	\$10.6M
Impact of Management to No Jobs	555	340
Impact Visitors to No. Jobs	12690	220

These figures show (as do other comparisons) that Fraser Island management is underfunded and compares unfavourably with spending on other World Heritage sites.

FRASER ISLAND DEFENDERS ORGANISATION LIMITED

NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thirty-Second Annual General Meeting of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited will be held at 1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO 4151 at 7.30 p.m., Wednesday, 8th August, 2008.

BUSINESS:

1. To receive the Profit and Loss Statement, Balance Sheets and Reports of the Directors and Auditors
2. To elect Directors for the ensuing term in accordance with the Articles of Association.
3. General Business.

BY THE ORDER OF THE BOARD

John Sinclair
Honorary Secretary
DATED this 1st day of June, 2009

PROXY FORM

32nd Annual General Meeting

I,
(Please print in BLOCK letters)

of
being a of Fraser Island Defenders Organization financial member

do hereby appoint

or failing him/her as my proxy,
to vote on my behalf at the Thirty-first Annual General Meeting, to be held at 1/32 Weston Street, COORPAROO 4151 at 7.30 p.m.,
Wednesday 8th August, 2009 and at any adjournment thereof.

Signedthisday of, 2009



URGENT

Section 248 of the Companies (Queensland) Code provides that all members be given 21 days notice of any meeting (including A.G.M.s) at which they are entitled to vote. It is important that as many proxies as possible are received. The Proxy Form is also taken as your apology for non-attendance. This form (or a copy) should be completed under Article 31 of the constitution. **If you cannot attend the meeting please photocopy this form and return it promptly** to reach Secretary, FIDO, PO Box 909 TOOWONG Q 4066 by **Tuesday, 7th August, 2009**

Nomination Form for FIDO Office Bearers

To be returned to: Secretary, FIDO, PO Box 909 TOOWONG Q 4066 by Tuesday, 11th August, 2009

We,and
being financial members of the Fraser Island Defenders Organization

hereby nominate

for the position of for the 2009-10 term

Signed..... Nominator

Signed..... Seconder