



MOONBI 127

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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Politics: Our page 2 story reports that politics seems to be being played for politics sake rather than addressing the business of government. Protecting political interests takes precedent over public interest and this is to the detriment of Fraser Island. Not only has the Newman government put the recognition of Fraser Island's additional World Heritage values and those of Cooloola and surrounding marine environment on hold but they have also deferred seemingly indefinitely proceeding to give the region's National Parks their first ever statutory Management Plan.

Funding: The page 3 article looks at the annual report for the Great Sandy Region and the budget. It discloses that the QPWS now spends about \$56 per hectare on Fraser Island and Cooloola whereas in the 1990s the QPWS was spending \$60 per hectare for Queensland's sand island national parks. The budget allocated to Fraser Island is much less than the cost of caring for it in 2013.

Volunteers: With a Caring for Country Grant plus another program with BMRG funding assistance, the village of Eurong, once a major centre for weed infestation on Fraser Island, is being progressively and positively transformed. Coincidental with over 1,000 voluntary hours of effort and dedication, Eurong and the Fraser Island nursery capacity is being progressively transformed to ensure that never again will any plants need to be taken to Fraser Island as seeds or in pots. FIDO is still looking for volunteers for bush regeneration in three different weeks at Eurong between now and June: **10th to 16th March, 21st to 27th April and 26th May to 1st June.** See Story on p6.

Progress on the George Haddock Track: Towards the end of the year FIDO hopes to recruit volunteers to build the 51-kilometre George Haddock Track. FIDO and the NPAQ have just completed the Environmental Impact Statement that was a daunting task for voluntary organizations with very limited resources. Story p. 8 See EIS and details on line.

Monitoring: Also in collaboration with the QPWS and FINIA, FIDO has been able to establish monitoring sites to measure sediment movement caused by vehicular traffic and by photo records impacts of visitation at Lake McKenzie (Boorangoorra). See story on p4 and details: www.fido.org.au

Dingo Attacks and the Review: The hysteria over the status of Fraser Island dingoes has gone on for long enough. For over a decade many aspects of Fraser Island management have been on the backburner due to the political pre-occupation with dingoes and trying to satisfy skeptical dingophiles who won't accept that Fraser Island dingoes are being well managed. It is time to accept the umpire's decision. Story p 5

Wild weather impacts Fraser Island: The photo opposite illustrates the power of just one storm. As well as carving away large slices of the beach our monitoring sites show that

over 5 centimetres of sediment was deposited on some of the alluvial plumes where FIDO installed monitoring poles to measure the depth of sediment. Further wild deluges on 18 February made it impractical to carry out more detailed measurements then.

Commonwealth action needed: Fraser Island has suffered from continuing Canberra indifference about the protection of its OUV. We hope the next government cares a lot more.

Backgrounders: One backgrounder to this MOONBI deals with the impact of wind on the lakes creating such distinctive features as lunettes, beaches and spits while the other deals with the sad history of how the recognition of Cooloola's World Heritage values has been dealt with.

Biennial Conference: "Fraser Island a Natural Laboratory" Reserve the day! **Thursday 8th August, Mt Cootha Auditorium.** The program is taking shape: Keynote Speaker will be Hon Barry Jones; just six papers have been invited including the latest on Fraser Island dingo, research on the mangroves and the fens and the possibilities of reintroducing koalas to Fraser Island. A prominent Australian artist will discuss the role that places like Fraser Island play in the creative inspiration for the arts. **See web site for full details.**



Wild weather and severe coastal erosion on Fraser Island followed Ex-cyclone Oswald at the end of January. This erosion at the start of the track to the Sandy Cape lighthouse was the result epitomizing the extent of the blast. Photo courtesy QPWS

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Most of Fraser Island's Problems are Political

This MOONBI elsewhere describes the spirit of cooperation that is helping address a number of Fraser Island management problems particularly through the FINIA collaboration. The community has expressed its support through voluntary efforts. Now although the governments are anxious to recruit and capitalize on volunteers, the politicians don't want to dirty their hands to engage with the volunteers. The principal contributor to the issues that Fraser Island currently suffers from is political indifference at a national, state and local level. Politicians seem to be more preoccupied with politics than with the business of governing the country and managing one of its greatest natural assets and features.

Going Backwards

Apart from the cuts to Fraser Island's and FIDO's budgets, the election of the Newman Government has so far meant two other backwards steps for Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region. Not only has the Newman government put the recognition of Fraser Island's additional World Heritage values and those of Cooloolool and surrounding marine environment on hold but they have also deferred seemingly indefinitely proceeding to give the region's National Parks their first ever statutory Management Plans. The program is further complicated by an inability or unwillingness of some Ministers to communicate with conservationists. FIDO is still like most Queensland voluntary conservation groups waiting for an opportunity to meet Queensland National Parks Minister Steve Dixon who has been in the job for almost a year.

FIDO is confident that if Ministers took more direct personal interest in Fraser Island, we wouldn't see the continued degradation occurring there.

Urgently Needed Management Plan

When the Goss Government adopted the Great Sandy Region Management Plan in 1994, it did not use any statutory powers. As a result the Plan has no statutory basis which has enabled it to be in some cases little more than an advisory guideline that some ministers have chosen to vary. Even when it went through a sham review in 2005, the plan was explicitly prefaced with, *"This is not a statutory Management Plan under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 It is considered a management statement for the purposes of providing management support for the region"*.

In 2011 the QPWS finally began developing a Management Plan for the Great Sandy Region under the Nature Conservation Act. It was progressing when the Newman Government came to power and gutted the bureaucracy and now the whole process has been deferred indefinitely and the idea of certainty and commitment to a plan has gone out the door.



Tim Flannery on Fraser for BBC "Coasts" TV series

Additional World Heritage Recognition

The Commonwealth Government has been as indifferent as ever to the recognition of the additional World Heritage

values that were to be included in the new nomination of the Great Sandy Region. The Commonwealth was represented at the Joint Advisory Committee meeting but there was no report from the Commonwealth. Perhaps because the Commonwealth does so little for Fraser Island, there was nothing to report and its participation seems only tokenistic.

As a result of the meeting of the Fraser Island Joint World Heritage Advisory Committees in October 2012, the following resolution was adopted:

We, the members of the Joint Advisory Committees for the Fraser Island World Heritage Area (FIWHA), strongly advise the Minister to reconsider activating and progressing the nomination for the Cooloolool extension of the FIWHA. Minister Powell replied to all members advising that due to finance it was not a state priority to proceed with the nomination but "As you will be aware, it is the Australian Government that can take the nomination to the World Heritage Committee."

Resources only for resources extraction: Never being shy of tackling a goliath, FIDO wrote to Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke and said that the Queensland Government was willing to let the Commonwealth Government proceed with the nomination. A fairly swift reply from the parsimonious Commonwealth Department said that they had no resources to undertake the process. There the matter ends while the Queensland and Federal Governments are sparing nothing to get World Heritage listing for parts of Cape York Peninsula so that they can console the community while they proceed with plans to plunder the rest of the Cape.

Local Government's Political Indifference

As well as having the farcical splintering of the responsibility for Fraser Island management mainly between two Queensland Government departments and the indifference of the Commonwealth Government, the newly elected Fraser Coast Regional Council councilors remain imperviously indifferent to the management of the island that gave the region its name and helps drive the regional economy. No Council representative has attended any meetings of the Fraser Island Advisory Committee on which they are nominally included since the elections last April.

Nobody is even certain which Councilor's responsibility it is. Is it the responsibility for Councilor Darren Everard who represents Division 7 in which Fraser Island falls? His portfolio is "Sport, Recreation Open Spaces and Events". It may fall within the portfolio of "Tourism or Regional Marketing" or "Waterways and Coastal Infrastructure" or it might even be the responsibility of the Mayor but so far nobody on the Council has held up their hand to fill the vacancy of Sue Brooks who was not re-elected to a now all-male Council and who was subsequently removed from the CAC where she made a significant contribution.

Where the QPWS Money Goes in the Great Sandy Region

In the 1990s it was estimated that it was costing approximately \$60 per hectare to manage Queensland's sand island national parks. FIDO has analysed the most recent figures available to us and calculates that the cost per ha for the Great Sandy National Park (Fraser Island and Cooloola) is now \$56.00 per hectare. The fact that expenditure has failed to keep abreast with the CPI indicates either an abnormal increase in efficiency or productivity or else the neglect of core responsibilities such as the failure to protect Indian Head from aggravated degradation.

While the structures of Government in Queensland are being overhauled and either purged or thinned down by the Newman regime, following their landslide electoral victory, there has been one useful positive. The QPWS organization in the Great Sandy Region is no longer a closely guarded Crown secret. Helpful and enlightening information is contained in the regional 2011-12 Annual Report.

Visitor Stats are a mystery: Unfortunately some of the information most vital to understanding the problems of management, namely how many people actually visited Fraser Island during the year are unobtainable. This would have enabled some accurate comparisons with other years and provided a better understanding of the needs and pressures on Ranger staff.

From the Annual Report we learn:

- There were 88,000 vehicle permits issued for the year; (We assume that this was for the two RAM areas — Fraser Island and Cooloola.) This was an increase of 18% from 2010-11 and this we understand is recovering from a significant contraction in 2009.
- 548,000 camper nights were spent in the Great Sandy Region in 2011-12, an increase in 3% on the previous year. (We assume that this includes Inskip Point RAM area which is a most popular camping area as well as Fraser Island and Cooloola)
- There are 39 QPWS employees based on Fraser Island and 43 for all of Cooloola (including Noosa North Shore and Inskip Point)
- The Commonwealth Government contributed \$203, 330 (That covered only the functioning of the Fraser Island Advisory Committees)
- The state expenditure on Fraser Island was \$4,622,718 of which \$2,532,180 went on salaries and \$2,079, 835 was operational expenditure.
- \$3,544,853 was collected in Fraser Island RAM (access fees) leaving the State Government to contribute \$1,077, 865 for operational expenditure (excludes capital works that amounted to \$2,551,732 for Fraser Island, Cooloola and Inskip Point).
- Judging by the RAM fees collected in the first year of the Cooloola RAM area, the visitation to Cooloola was approaching the levels of visitation to Fraser Island especially when not all parts of Cooloola are included in the RAM area. (Cooloola RAM fees = \$2,532,189 : Fraser Island RAM fees = \$3,544,853).
- The Inskip Point RAM revenue was a surprising \$1,001,797 all from camping.
- The Moon Point barge landing on Fraser Island was revoked *"due to the limited use of this site, water inundation and tenure issues of the access road"*.

This more open communication helps us appreciate how much is being achieved with so little although clearly the productivity could be significantly improved if the

government was as generous in managing its National Parks as it is in building sporting stadiums and promoting grand events. Although Tourism is one of the four pillars of the Newman Government, the very attractions that have helped drive Queensland tourism, namely our great natural areas are being allowed to run down and few more drastically so than Fraser Island and Cooloola.

High Costs: The 2011-12 Annual Report for the Great Sandy Region comments on the high expenditure to operate on Fraser Island *"due to the harsh sand and salt environment, transport costs via vehicle, barge and aircraft, power generation and waste removal"*. Unfortunately the report didn't include the extra costs incurred to manage the dingoes. The high expenditure accords with reports from a former Queensland National Parks Director Des Boyland. 20 years ago Boyland estimated that the cost of managing Queensland's sand island national parks was ten times higher per hectare than other Queensland parks. FIDO calculates that the QPWS currently spends about \$56 per hectare on Fraser Island management. This is inadequate to properly manage the island's unique natural resources.

Climatic Extremes: Although 2012 began with more rain in the early part of the year than recorded during the cyclonic flooding and disasters of 2011, the second half of the year continued abnormally dry. The intense dry was becoming critical for the first 23 days of January 2013 when fires were creating havoc and disasters in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania as well as South Australia and Western Australia. Mercifully Fraser Island was spared the wildfires although it wasn't spared the lashing delivered by the aftermath of Cyclone Oswald. Fraser Island didn't escape and had to be almost closed down in the wake with many large trees fallen across roads and significant beach erosion. (See Sandy Cape track photo p1.) Ex-cyclone Oswald was in some ways more devastating than a full cyclone because instead of lasting for just a relatively few hours as it passed over, Oswald blasted away for days. It came soon after some record high tides that have portents of what is expected to become a norm as sea levels rise.



The King tides just south of Happy Valley
Photo supplied by Bree Jashin, VP Fraser Island Association

Monitoring on Fraser Island

Greater environmental monitoring needs to be undertaken to ensure that the OUV (Outstanding Universal Value) is not being compromised or degraded by visitation. For many years FIDO has advocated more and better monitoring of the natural environment on Fraser Island by the QPWS. We understand that the lack of monitoring is due to the lack of an adequate budget and that is a political issue. However while waiting for the politicians to provide the budget to protect this national treasure, FIDO has been busily engaged in initiating and assisting to get some vitally needed monitoring done with voluntary assistance.

Monitoring Boorangoora's Beach

There was an outcry over the disfigurement of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) when a fence was constructed on the beach of Boorangoora (Lake McKenzie) in 2010. FIDO argued that this impacted on the OUV of Fraser Island inscribed on the World Heritage List for its outstanding natural beauty. (See MOONBI 125) Complaints about the fence and the plantation it contained grew to a crescendo as the La Nina events of 2010-12 lifted the levels of the lake leaving almost no public beach

The QPWS sensibly sought the assistance of FINIA to provide a resolution to reconciling environmental protection, public recreation and World Heritage values. They also removed the fencing during 2012 which was greatly appreciated by FIDO and the public at large. At the same time FINIA decided on the idea for the photo monitoring developed by Yoko Shimizu and Laura Simmons from the University of the Sunshine Coast. The monitoring project was endorsed by Prof Jamie Schulmiester, a University of Queensland geomorphologist and member of the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee who is planning further scientific work on the island in coming years

In late November 2012, the QPWS that supplied the posts and FIDO volunteers installed four photo monitoring posts to enable visual monitoring of the beach and its use as well as the state of the beach over time. By placing a camera on top of a post and focussing on the base of a particular melaleuca, FINIA plans to build up a photographic record of the beach to help identify any significant changes over time that should be addressed by management. The project and how the public can participate in it is described at <https://fido.org.au/monitoring/LMKB%20Photo%20Monitoring%20Project.pdf>



Boorangoora Monitoring Site No.1 is an unobtrusive post high on the lunette that allows photography of a significant section of beach by focusing on the base of a distant melaleuca.

Monitoring roads sediment depositions

For more than a decade FIDO has raised concerns about the extent and impact of sediments being washed off the Fraser Island sand tracks. The impact sensitive sites including Yidney Lake, Lake Allom, the swale behind the lunette of the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) lunette and at a site where the road passes close to the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) have been specifically identified. However the extent and impact of the road sediment depositions have never been fully assessed. During a field inspection of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) by the Fraser Island World Heritage Joint Advisory Committees in October FIDO was given permission to monitor the movement of sediment from roads.

In July FIDO received some funding from the Burnett Mary Regional Group to undertake environmental monitoring on Fraser Island in conjunction with its work on weeding / bush regeneration work program at Eurong for 2012-13 financial year. This provided some resources to establish some initial and very basic monitoring sites near the Central Station to Eurong Road where there are large alluvial plumes.

Following extensive consultation on affordable monitoring methodology FIDO established the first eight sediment sites in November 2012. The posts will help to assess the extent and the impact of sediment washed from the roads. the datum poles should be considered as only Stage 1 of an on-going long- term monitoring project. Further refinements may be added to these sites as information gained dictates and resources permit. As well as phot monitoring the posts will measure the depth of sediment accretion at the base of the posts. Details and location of the first 8 poles is at: <http://www.fido.org.au/monitoring/FIDO%20Sediment%20Monitoring%20Sites.pdf>



These monitoring sites currently allow only photo monitoring and measuring the depth of sand accumulated at the base of the posts. Further sites and techniques are proposed to continue monitoring of the impacts of sediment movement .

Beware of Fraser Island Dingophilia

There are a number of people with such an obsessive love of dingoes that it distorts their whole vision of the interaction of wildlife and ecology. Fraser Island has more than a fair share of these people that could be fairly described as Dingophiles. Unfortunately their obsession is causing the whole management of Fraser Island to be distorted in a most unreasonable way. Dingophiles cost Fraser Island dearly.

The Dingophiles' misplaced obsession with the welfare of Fraser Island dingoes is based on a number of beliefs that aren't supported by science or data. They believe that Fraser Island dingoes are endangered; that all Fraser Island dingoes are starving; that their population is dwindling as a result of the humane destruction of aggressive and dangerous animals; that the solution to all of these problems is feeding dingoes; that anyone feeding Fraser Island dingoes should not be prosecuted; that the Dingo Management Strategy (DMS) is flawed; that the scientists and managers who developed the strategy are incompetent and don't know what they are doing; that there is a conspiracy by government to defend the QPWS and the DMS that dingophiles believe is indefensible.

Fraser Island overall management is being adversely impacted by Dingophiles pursuing their obsessions. FIDO believes that more balanced media coverage is needed on the dingo issue.

Endless harassment and queries: In 2011-12 102 Ministerial responses (39%) for all matters in the Great Sandy Region related to Fraser Island dingoes. Nine of the 15 Right to Information requests (60%) (requiring 315.5hrs of QPWS staff time), related to dingoes. These figures do not include attention to general complaints. Of 41 media enquiries, 51% also related to dingoes. The Scientific and Community Advisory Committees have similarly spent a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the issue of dingoes and this is in response to the frenzy about dingoes whipped up by the Dingophiles

Political Pressure: For a number of years Dingophiles attacked the QPWS, the Bligh Government (claimed to be prisoners of the bureaucrats) and the rangers engaged in implementing the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (DMS). The dingophiles thought that the election of the Newman Government with a commitment to an independent review of the DMS would result in it being scrapped. They want people to be allowed to feed dingoes or the Government to set up dingo feeding stations. Dingophiles ensured that dingoes are a Newman Government priority.

One of the new government's first acts was to contract private environmental consultants Ecosure with a wide range of experience and expertise, to conduct a scientific review of the DMS to place the process outside of any bureaucratic influence. The aim of the review is to protect the dingo population and to ensure visitor safety. As an additional safeguard to ensure that Ecosure wasn't being "snowed" by the QPWS, Minister Powell appointed an independent Review Steering Committee headed by eminent biologist, Prof Hugh Possingham to assess the final findings.

Science skeptics: Even before Ecosure had got far into the process it came under fire from dingophiles. Ecosure set out by holding public consultations but apparently in the eyes of the Dingophiles they have tainted the findings because (a) they allowed one of the contributors to the DMS, Lee Allen

to speak at the Public meeting and (b) they employed Lee's son, Ben who is completing his Ph.D on dingoes. Such defamatory assertions allows them to dismiss the findings of this most detailed and complex study ever undertaken into dingoes anywhere in the world if it doesn't produce the findings they want to allow them to feed dingoes.

It is time to stop the distortion of Fraser Island management priorities by the dingophiles. Higher priority management issues need urgent attention to protect the OUV (Outstanding Universal Value) of World Heritage Fraser Island. When Dingophiles advocate that Rangers neglect their jobs of cleaning toilets to look at dead dingoes immediately it is drawn to their attention, it is time to question the priorities of this self-appointed and largely unqualified group.

Many highly qualified experts (not paid by the QPWS and who don't owe the QPWS any favours), indeed most dingo scientists and animal behaviourists agree:

- **Fraser Island dingoes are not endangered;**
- **Numbers of dangerous/aggressive animals humanely destroyed (7 in 2011 and 6 in 2012) is sustainable given the recruitment of 2 to 3 surviving pups from each of the 13 to 15 known litters each year;**
- **Fraser Island dingoes are well fed. They stand 60 cms high 1.2m long (the same size as other Australian dingoes but have an average weight heavier than mainland dingoes. Fraser Island dingoes average weight is around 18 kg compared with Kakadu (16kg), Victorian Highlands (15 kg) and Central Australia (13kg)**
- **The pack structure of dingoes is not now being affected by the culling program because most of the dangerous and aggressive animals are the social outcasts without a pack which is why they are scrounging around camps and places where they may get scraps left by people.**

Getting Priorities right

Recently some dingophiles were outraged when it was reported to Rangers who were cleaning the Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) toilets that two the dead dingo pups had just been sighted in the area. Their indignation was that the rangers didn't make attending to the two dead dingoes a higher priority than their responsibilities for public health and maintenance.

As one interested observer noted, *"I was under the impression that it is in fact a responsibility of a QPWS Ranger to ensure that amenities and facilities are kept in a functioning condition as part of the overall management of a protected area that is open to the public? It appears that the general community does not understand that a Ranger's job description is not simply to pacify hysterical responses from visitors. I can understand that people can be very upset when discovering dead dingo pups. When the last time anyone read a story in the paper about people being outraged after finding a dead goanna or migratory bird? The dingo issue has become so 'sensationalised' that people cannot place this issue in context anymore."*

A new look for Eurong

FIDO has doubled its efforts to control weeds in Eurong in the current financial year as a result of grants under two separate programs. FIDO also ambitiously aims to double the number of weed species identified on Fraser Island that are completely eradicated including Clivea lilies & Brazilian Cherries.

Two Programs: Already FIDO has carried out three of the six planned working bees that are being assisted with funding from the BMRG through the Community Coast and Marine Project Grants program (led by John Sinclair) and Caring for Country program that is also assisting to build up the capacity of the Eurong nursery (led by Michael Lowe). In addition efforts are continuing to bring the weed infestations in Eurong under control and to encourage the residents and landholders to maintain the village as an essentially weed free area instead of being a major centre of weed infestation. So far since the new programs were launched in September, more than 1000 volunteer hours have been employed with some amazing impact. Bush regeneration diaries are on FIDO's web site at www.fido.org.au. Photographic records can be found of some of the working bees on John Sinclair's Picasa page including:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/106668843048738450637/FraserIslandBushRegenerationMonitoringWeekNovember2012>

New Outlook

The spirit of cooperation between the FINIA partners was well demonstrated when an enthusiastic team of indigenous QPWS rangers and heavy machinery assisted FIDO to relocate the sign shelter at Eurong from beside a walking track no longer used to a very prominent site adjacent to the public toilet block at Eurong where it is expected to have a much greater impact.



"Smiley" Burns has reasons to smile after the Butchulla boys helped FIDO volunteers relocate the Eurong sign shelter for weeds and community notices. 29 November 2012

Eradication is FIDO's objective

Of particular concern is the total removal of all **Brazilian cherries** from Second Valley because we have already discovered that these are being spread into the adjacent bush by birds. Truckloads of Brazilian cherries have already been removed but having discovered umbrella trees popping up in the bush at Yidney Lake, FIDO wants Brazilian cherries added to the 18 out of 193 weed species on Fraser Island that have been successfully eradicated before the birds spread them further and they take over the bush. Clivias were eradicated before they even made it to the official weed list.

The challenge: The weeding at Eurong has cleared most of the weeds on the northern side of First Valley up to the Dingo Fence and has included work on weeds in the resort and some private properties with the support of the landholders. Now attention is turning to Second Valley and the "no-man's-land" between there and the Resort. Our teams of bush regenerators (some of whom have travelled from interstate and paid for their accommodation agree that these are the most challenging parts of Eurong especially bringing such difficult weeds as Madiera vine under control. While weed control is the immediate objective our long term aim is eradication of many weed species before they spread.



Another load destined for the Eurong Waste Transfer station. The bags are full of Clivia lilies found going feral at Eurong. Yet another large infestation of sisal has also been identified.

Children's stories: FIDO's educational program at Eurong also includes the development of children's stories to help make the younger generation more aware of weeds and their impact. One has demonized Bougainvillea for smothering Tommy Tuckeroo and another has dealt with how a seemingly innocent plant like Clivia lilies quickly turned into a weed at Eurong. These and other stories will be included on our revamped sign shelters and on the FINIA web site that FIDO is helping to facilitate.

Nature Note White Death

FIDO members who have observed what we refer to as "white death" on Fraser Island are actually referring to a fungus *Clavicularium extendens*. This fascinating fungus has adapted to a vegetative, aerial mode of life in the rainforest understorey. It is relatively common in the moister forests of the island. It tends to take the form of a vegetative sheet that lives on carrol twigs (*Backhousia myrtifolia*). Enveloped, decaying branchlets collapse into hanging net like tangles. We know it as "white death" but although scientists claim that its ability to kill has still to be proved, all of the evidence we have observed over the years is that this fungus does kill some Carroll on Fraser Island. Luckily the death toll is not excessive and the backhousia understorey on the island seems very sustainable.

From News on the Net:

Since MOONBI 126 FIDO has been monitoring the news report as usual relating to Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region and has been surprised by the mix of stories. There have been a number of stories related to accidents and incidents on and around Fraser Island and the usual raft of dingo stories that invariably invoke passionate responses from a range of misguided dingo lovers (See Article on Dingophiles p5). What was surprising about the dingo stories though is that the storm of criticism of dingo management is progressively abating and the tide has turned to increasing support for the current dingo management on Fraser Island. The following articles report try to summarize some of our on-going analysis of other stories making the news since MOONBI 126.

Plagues of Marine Stingers: An analysis of many other stories in the news indicates that there is an increasing number of weather or climate included changes that are making headlines. While few people will consider the large number of medical evacuations in the summer holidays as anything other than emergencies, FIDO analysis suggests that the large numbers of people seriously stung is a further sign of global warming and climate change that has seen stingers that were normally associated with more tropical waters moving further south into the Great Sandy Region where they were previously rare to unknown. Other climate stories relate to unusual weather conditions, storms, cyclones and fires.

Occasional Great Walk Closures: An irony of the second half of 2012 is that while many parts of the Fraser Island Great Walk were inundated due to the extraordinarily high water levels in the lakes, particularly Lake Boomanjin and Lake Benaroon, significant sections of the Fraser Island and Cooloola Great Walks had to be closed due to fire risk. The drying out of the forest following a particularly wet first five months of the year happened very abruptly. The climate had abruptly swung from La Nina to El Nino. The continual rain was followed by an exceptionally dry seven months. By October when the QPWS was obliged to close the Great Walks in the interests of public safety it was universally agreed that the whole forest was so tinder dry it would be foolish to allow people to be exposed to the risk of people being accidentally caught in a wildfire. FIDO is confident that the George Haddock Track that we and NPAQ will be a 51 kilometre section virtually immune from the type of flooding that has impacted the walking tracks in the Southern Lakes area.

Emergency services: In just 16 days over the Christmas-New Year break, the AGL Action Rescue Helicopter flew 14 mercy missions to Fraser Island where 17 patients were treated and/or lifted to hospital for varying problems including marine animal stings, burns, cuts, bits and medical conditions. These 14 mercy missions clocked up 22 hours, being ever ready to help the public hasn't always appreciated the services provided and have placed the whole rescue missions in extreme danger at times. On 9 January holiday revellers in four-wheel-drives thought it was a prank to shine bright spotlights into the eyes of the chopper pilot attempting to land in the dark at Orchid Beach. A 4WD passenger shone a spotlight directly at the helicopter cockpit. This temporarily blinded the pilot and could have ended in a crash landing. It wasn't a one off because further attempts were made to dazzle the pilot.

Accidents, crashes and mishaps: There have been many accidents and mishaps on Fraser Island that made the news since the last MOONBI including ships being wrecked off the coast and the usual run of accidents often the result of foolishness. The plethora of stories from stingers and the debate about whether the stingers were Irukandji resulted. A

couple of accidents in the last few months that caught the attention of the media involved buses. In October a tour bus mysteriously caught fire on Fraser Island about 1km south of the Maheno shipwreck. The driver's quick thinking and actions meant that the 24 passengers escaped with no harm. The driver and a passenger of another bus in November were not so lucky. They were changing the tyre when another passenger got back on the bus, causing it to roll. The two were crushed and had to be choppered off the island.

Christmas Island Influx: Just prior to Christmas drivers were reminded that road rules apply on Fraser Island beaches so they should stick to speed limits, wear seatbelts and not drink and drive. Visitor numbers were significantly up and visitors were better behaved. Fraser Island was close to capacity over Christmas with thousands of campers and holiday-makers making it the busiest it had been in years thanks to good camping weather. Island police were happy to have escaped any major incidents. Fraser Island police senior constable Bill Worden said a traffic operation in place on the island had not picked up a single drink-driver, although people were still being booked not wearing seatbelts.



The Maheno has deteriorated since this painting was made

Putting koalas back on Fraser: Queensland's koala population is rapidly declining due to habitat destruction. This has reignited discussions on better ways to protect the Australian icon. In his book *"Early Days on Fraser Island"* Rollo Petrie recalls Aborigines telling his family who lived on the island 100 years ago of where and how the last koala on Fraser Island died at the base of a gum tree near Fig Tree. Now there is a call to establish a colony of koalas on the island to help this threatened species. There is a healthy population of koalas on Stradbroke Island and koalas have lived there throughout recorded history without a population explosion. Kangaroo Island and some Victorian Islands have suffered overpopulation by koalas and this has made Queensland wildlife authorities wary of releasing koalas on Fraser Island even though there has been no problem of overpopulation on Magnetic Island. Fraser Island has a good supply of koala trees including tallowwood, blackbutt, forest red gum, scribbly gum and bloodwood that could sustain a significant population. It is certain that the Fraser Island Conference on 8th August will hear some lively discussions on this topic because reintroduction of koalas to Fraser Island is on the very interesting agenda.

Get ready for FIDO's most ambitious project

FIDO has a reputation as a very effective environmental advocate to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Fraser Island but our on-ground work to help protect those values is often overlooked. In 1981-82 FIDO volunteers contributed 18 weekend on voluntary effort to construct the first boardwalk on Fraser Island, a shelter shed with picnic facilities and toilets at Eli Creek. The Bjelke-Petersen Government largely succeeded in stopping FIDO getting any credit for this by demolishing all of FIDO's work and replacing it. For years FIDO has carried out weeding operations (Story p 6) but now with our sister organization NPAQ we are hoping to embark on the 51 kilometre George Haddock Track.

The Environmental Impact Statement

The National Parks Association of Queensland and FIDO struggled for two years to complete the George Haddock Track (GHT) EIS requested by the then Environment Minister. We offered to build the track but hadn't anticipated being asked to complete a detailed assessment. We haven't been able to move forward with any on-ground and construction until we have met this prerequisite. We were quoted would cost a minimum of \$20,000 for experts in the field to carry out the study but it was \$20,000 that neither organization could meet. Thus it was that volunteers (including some very highly qualified experts) undertook the daunting and challenging task. After almost three years we were able to finally conclude the unusual and unfamiliar task. The Environmental Impact Statement can be seen at: http://www29.griffith.edu.au/radioimersd/file_transfers/EIS%20FINAL%20FOR%20PRINT%20+EDITS.pdf

The Environmental Impact Statement is now being assessed by Officers of a depleted QPWS and we await approval to be able to proceed and seek grants to assist us to build the walking track and associated infrastructure. We thank all those who contributed to seeing the Environmental Impact Statement finalized.

The George Haddock Track Route

The chosen 51 kilometre route from Lake Garawongera to Arch Cliffs on Hervey Bay has the following features:

- ✓ *It is aesthetically very attractive passing close to five of Fraser Island's unique perched dune lakes - Hidden Lake, Lake Coomboo, Lake Freshwater, Lake Allom and Lake Bowarrady. Four of these lakes will only be accessible to hikers. The route also passes through some of the island's most pristine and spectacular old growth rainforest.*
- ✓ *The route closely follows the route originally proposed for the Fraser Island Great Walk before that project was truncated for budgetary reasons;*
- ✓ *Because there is already a designated walking track from Dundubara to Lake Bowarrady, the proposed extension will link with that track but offer an alternative option to terminate at Arch Cliffs.*
- ✓ *The proposed track will have a total length of 51 kms of which 40.1 kms follow pre-existing roads or tracks. These sections of former tracks will be linked by 10.9 kms of new track to be constructed according to*
- ✓ *There is only one stream to be crossed, Bowarrady Creek and the crossing coincides with an existing recently replaced road bridge.*

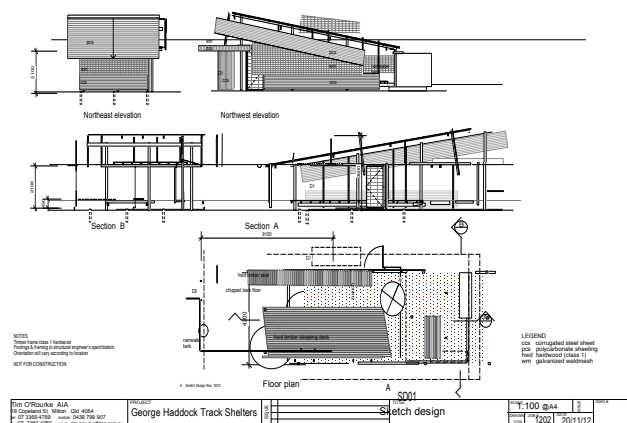
The map of the proposed route is in the EIS.

The Coming Project

The scale of the project is that it will be developed in four or five stages over time once the green light is given and subject to gaining grants to help finance the work. Apart from the track that needs to be built and then maintained, four shelters and toilet amenities are to be built at each of the four campsites. It is hoped to make a start on these hopefully on the first week of December.



"Jo-Jo" Gala (Butchulla representative) Peter Riedinger, Judy Powell (Anthropologist) and John Sinclair in discussion during the Cultural Heritage Assessment of the project



Shelters an innovation for Queensland

A feature of the George Haddock Track is the proposal to incorporate four dingo proof sleeping shelters. These will provide better shelter from the elements without hikers needing to carry tents. They are very basic with only bare boards to sleep on but hikers will be safer from falling limbs and there will be a much smaller site impacted. Better is the fact that hikers will be able to cook inside and out of the weather. University of Queensland architects are assisting and have developed a design for the shelters.

Late News

Fraser Visit by IMCG

Having just having had the Newman Government withdraw FIDO's promised \$5,000 grant for the 2012-13 financial year, FIDO was pleasantly surprised to be advised this month (February) by Environment Minister Tony Burke that we had qualified for a \$3,000 Grant for Voluntary Environmental Sustainability and Heritage Organizations (GVESHO) Grant. It is the first time that FIDO has received direct funding from the Commonwealth. The grant is very timely as we are financially pressed with a 2013 program that includes:

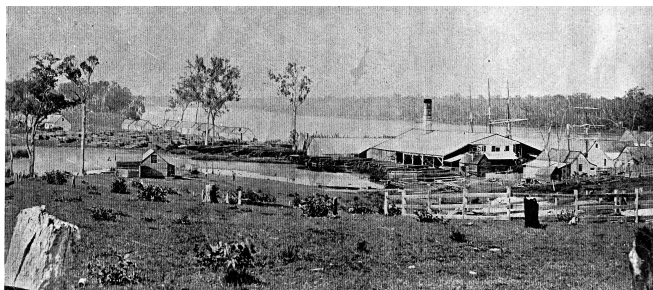
- Organizing 5th Biennial Fraser Island Conference — "A Natural Laboratory" for Thursday 8th August;
- Hosting a visit by the IMCG in late November;
- Continuing our monitoring and weeding program;
- Advancing the new 51 km George Haddock Track

Fraser Visit by IMCG

FIDO has opportunistically capitalized on an Australian study tour by the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) to invite some of the group to add a few days to their visit to southern states to examine Fraser Island's unique fens. These are some of the world's top peatland specialists and we hope that the visit of a small contingent may provide some expert advice and opinions to enable the best management of these more recently discovered features.

FIDO's interest in Great Sandy Strait

In November FIDO's interest in Great Sandy Strait and adjoining estuarine areas of Tin Can Bay and the Mary River was demonstrated when the FIDO Executive held a inspection tour there that included a visit to Poverty Point in Cooloola. We then followed the path of the log rafters from the shore ending at Dundathu where the kauri pine logs from Cooloola and Fraser Island were first milled. We held our Monthly meeting at Poona. Thus it was with a feeling of *deja vous* when we learnt that the Poverty Point terminus of the Pettigrew and Sims private railway built in 1863 is to be added to the Queensland Heritage List. FIDO will consider further trips for interested people during summer months when the trans-equatorial waders are in greatest numbers in Great Sandy Strait.



The northern terminus for the log rafts from Cooloola was Sims and Pettigrew's sawmill on the banks of the Mary River. Although now almost unrecognizable through forest regrowth this once supported a community of over 100 people.

Koalas on Fraser Island: In his book "Early Days on Fraser Island" Rollo Petrie reported, "Nugget (said) there were koalas on the island." He relates the story told by the Butchulla of the last koala to die at the base of a blue gum beside Figtree Creek

Fraser Island Conference Taking Shape

FIDO's 5th Biennial Conference is taking shape. The Mt Coottha Botanic Gardens Auditorium has been booked for 8th August 2013. Some most interesting visual displays have been arranged. \$100 (or discounted) includes lunch.

Barry Jones A.O.: Keynote Address will be delivered by writer, broadcaster and former Science Minister Hon. Dr. Barry Jones. Barry Jones, AO. His career has spanned education, film, politics, civil liberties, constitutional change and the knowledge society". His books include "*Sleepers Wake! Technology and the Future of Work*". He is the only person to have been elected as a Fellow to all four Australian learned Academies. Barry Jones is one of Australia's great original thinkers and FIDO is honoured that he has accepted our invitation to be our Keynote Speaker. Doubtless he will inevitably touch on Climate Change probably the greatest single threat to the long-term future of Fraser Island and a subject he is passionate about.

Six other speakers have been invited to address topics of great significance in helping the understanding of Fraser Island's OUV and to allow discussion time. The topics are:

- Climate Change
- Dingoes and the latest research on this topic;
- Fens — the fascinating mires we are still learning about;
- Mangroves: the Great Sandy has a rich estuarine system;
- The aesthetics of Fraser Island inspiring artistic creativity
- Koalas: They once were on Fraser Island. Why not now?

This clearly promises to be the most interesting Fraser Island conference as well as being most affordable so make a firm appointment in to come and hear Barry Jones and learn so much more about our precious World Heritage OUV.

Fifth Biennial Great Sandy Conference
Fraser Island -
A Natural Laboratory
Thursday, 8th August, 2013
9.00 am to 5.00 pm
 at the
Auditorium
Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, Brisbane
COST: \$100
Includes light lunch and morning and afternoon tea
\$80 for FIDOMembers, \$60 for students and concessions

This conference seeks to improve understanding and appreciation of the unique natural values of this outstanding region. It also offers a forum for to discuss the science behind Fraser Island issues and seeks to help achieve better and environmentally sustainable management of the Great Sandy Region and the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage area.

Details of the evolving conference program will be posted on the FIDO web site: www.fido.org.au

Organised by
 Fraser Island Defenders Organisation
 FIDO: The Watchdog of Fraser Island
 Supported by
 Fraser Island World Heritage Scientific Advisory Committee
 and
 Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance

