



MOONBI 131

MOONBI is the name given by the Butchalla Aborigines to the central part of their homeland, Fraser Island or "K'gari"

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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Keeping abreast of fast moving events: There are so many events happening that FIDO has taken to augmenting our biannual MOONBI newsletters with Electronic newsletters as well as forums to communicate with members such as on the Sunshine Coast last October. We produced one newsletter in November to describe some impacts of Native title. Our second more urgent FIDO E-News followed the calling of the Queensland Election for 31 January. That explained why a change of government in Queensland was in the interests of the Queensland and Fraser Island environment. FIDO plans more of these newsletters but they only reach our members or subscribers who have nominated their Email addresses.

The Impact of Native Title: The determination that the Butchulla have Native Title for more than 95% of K'Gari on 24 October was a most joyous occasion. It is however a game changer as far as future K'Gari's management is concerned. It also adds a new layer of responsibility in decision-making. FIDO is already dealing with the new PBC, the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation. See p 3

Progress on Walking Track: With the completion of the Friends of Parks funding at the end of 2014, work on the George Haddock Track has temporarily stalled for a lack of approval that is a prerequisite to obtaining funding to develop further stages of this ambitious project. FIDO and NPAQ who are jointly developing the 52km track and infrastructure hope that work can resume by the end of 2015. (See p2)

Queensland's new political scene: When the Queensland state Election was abruptly called for 31 January during the summer holiday season, most pundits predicted an LNP victory that FIDO viewed with great apprehension because of the predicted further adverse impacts on the Great Sandy Region. Our worst fears were avoided when the Queensland electorate returned a finely balanced Parliament with a Labor Government. The new Environment Minister Steven Miles is a believer in climate change and has good green credentials. The whole government seems more disposed towards environmental protection than either its immediate predecessor or the Bligh Government.

World Parks: John Sinclair represented FIDO at the World Parks Conference in Sydney, a huge event with almost 6,000 attendees. You can read his report (p6).

IUCN's World Heritage report Card for K'Gari: During the World Parks Congress, the IUCN released a report on each of the 197 natural, and 31 mixed World Heritage properties. Despite Australia's bravado Australian sites could have been better. Fraser Island was marked better than Kakadu, Queensland's Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef, but there is no room for complacency. See p5

World Parks: FIDO was represented at the World Parks Conference in Sydney, a huge event that has exploded since the early days of FIDO to have almost 6,000 attendees. You can read the report (p6).

Call for Volunteers: Last year volunteers made an amazing contribution to Fraser Island coordinating contributing 10 volunteer weeks. Six of them addressed weed problems in Happy Valley and Eurong and four worked on the George Haddock Track and infrastructure. For the remainder of 2015 FIDO is proposing another six working bees on weeds in Happy Valley and Eurong. FIDO is now seeking volunteers for this work, so vital if the natural integrity of K'Gari is to be preserved.

Backgrounders: FIDO is releasing the first of a series of Backgrounders on Ballargan — the North White Cliffs area near McKenzies Jetty just south of Kingfisher Resort. This area has a fascinating history and geography that will cover four or five parts. Part 1 deals with the area over the millennia up to and including the Dreaming. The second backgrounder deals with the issue of Marine Debris that is waste from other places washing up on the K'Gari's shores.



Fraser Island felt little impact from Cyclone Marcia. There was heavy rain for only one day (12th February), but during that event thousands of tonnes of loose sand that had been churned up on the roads by buses and other 4WDs in previous weeks were scoured downhill. This was the scene at the crossroads between Central Station and Pile Valley

**Set aside the date now for
6th Biennial Fraser Island conference
Sand Sea and Sun
University of the Sunshine Coast 12th August 2015**

In This Issue

Progress on George Haddock Track	2
Butchulla's new role is a K'Gari Game Changer	3
Queensland's Transformed Political Scene	4
World Heritage and IUCN's report card on K'Gari	5
World Parks Congress in Sydney	6
News in Brief: FIDO disqualified from Grant, All is Forgiven ...	7
The coming 6 th Fraser Island conference "Sand, Sea and Sun"	8
Call for Volunteers for the remainder of 2015	9

Progress on the George Haddock Track

During 2014 after five years of research and preparing the Environmental Impact Statement for this 52 kilometre walk from Lake Garawongera physical work began on the track project. This was aided by a \$25,000 Friends of Parks Grant from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to FIDO's partners National Parks Association of Queensland. We began work with a vengeance and put in 1859 hours of on-the-ground work on Fraser Island involving more than 50 volunteers. One came 1600 kms from Malanda (twice). The building complex has been renamed the Harold Charles Barracks. The work fell into two categories. One was renovating the three disused buildings near Lake Allom to form a base as well as ultimately to serve as one of the four shelters on this section of the much longer (150 kilometre K'Gari Track to Hook Point). The other was to start clearing 41kms of track that we had approval for.

Buildings

There were three buildings in the complex near Lake Allom. A former generator shed lacked any roof or doors. These have been replaced and now it securely holds our lighting plant and tools. A larger shed was starting to suffer the ravages of rot and a rusted out roof. The roof and rotten boards have been replaced, the building painted and it now houses the small Kubota tractor used to assist in track clearing and maintenance.

The main building was the three bedroom barracks that had been created in 1986 by joining up two prefabricated building and adding a verandah. A leaky roof caused many problems rotting out ceilings and some walls. The roof was sealed. New guttering and a new 5,000 litre tank were installed. The building wasn't level and this has been rectified and all of the doors now open and close perfectly.

The work on the barracks is now effectively complete although there will doubtlessly be ongoing maintenance required. Before opening up the Common Room for hikers on the George Haddock Track it is proposed to install a small solar lighting system. The remaining three bedrooms and shower room are available for use by researchers. The Common Room has a new ceiling and some damaged wall panels have been replaced. There is now no evidence of the water damage and the painting and tidying have made the whole Common Room very presentable. Some refinements have been added including a blackboard for leaving notices, a new shelf in the laundry and a new bench top over the disconnected stove. A removable screen enables slide presentations in the common room at night.



Harold Charles (on the ladder) and his offsideers installing a new ceiling in the barracks that bear his name.

The sclerophyll and rainforest vegetation surrounding the building were closing in when we began the project. Almost all of this has been cleared away. The surrounding

environs had developed more than 20 years regrowth since it was last used to house Forestry workers and Police who were dealing with Greenie protesters in 1991 and 92. Most of the regrowth has been cleared and were able to accommodate twelve tents during the working bee and will serve as some fire protection in future.

The building complex has been renamed the Harold Charles Barracks to honour the building team leader who organized that aspect of this project. Much tender loving care has gone into cleaning, painting and fitting curtains.

While hikers will be limited to the Common Room, the bedroom section may be used by researchers pursuing projects in the least disturbed section of Fraser Island (K'Gari). There is already interest in using this well sited facility to advance a better understanding of K'Gari.

Track work

The track is being cleared in sections. Just over 35 kilometres are cleared as well prepared walking tracks. Some of this was cleared for management purposes (firebreaks and access) but gallons of sweat have been spent clearing some overgrown former roads. In some cases it was even difficult to find where the roads had been it was so overgrown. **16.7 kilometres** of proposed walking track remain to be completed. 10.9 kms in 10 sections requires Native Title approval before we can proceed there and when they are cleared we can get access to three other sections currently cut off. However as we completed the last working bee in October 2014 the Butchulla gained Native Title. Now there is a proper process able to deal with issues such as approving sections of the walking tracks and this process has begun with an inspection in March. There will be further consultations in May.

The two most incomplete stages are Lake Coomboo to Lake Allom where 3.8 kilometres are awaiting approval before work can proceed and about 8 kms between Lake Garawongera and Pine Hill. There are 5 kilometres to clear between M15 (Happy Valley-Urang Creek Road) and M16 (on the connecting road from Lake Garawongera to Yidney Scrub). This is the most difficult section remaining. 3.1 kilometres are all that separate M16 from Pine Hill and this includes a very attractive section through Yidney Scrub.

Now that Native Title has been determined, FIDO and NPAQ are seeking Butchulla approval that would enable us to secure QPWS authorization to proceed with Stage 2 in 2015. Stage 2 aims to complete the 52 km track and establish a hikers shelter and toilet at Lake Coomboo. MOONBI and Bulletins will advise when on-ground work will begin and call for volunteers when the position is clear to go ahead.

Butchulla's new role is a K'Gari Game Changer

On 24 October the Federal Court's Native Title Tribunal determined that the Butchulla had Native title rights over 95% of the island but didn't include Council, freehold or unallocated state land or the townships. The terms of Native Title had been negotiated between representatives of the Butchulla and the state and local government and other interested parties including Kingfisher. It appears to apply only to the National Park and even excluded the Telstra facilities. This determination is a game changer as far as management of the National Park is concerned and means that there needs to be far more consultation between the traditional owners, the Butchulla and the QPWS. A new Management Plan is now needed to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities.

Native Title for K'Gari Determined

The main outcome for the Butchulla seems to be pure pride and exhilaration. The determination includes non-exclusive rights to:

- Access and move about the area;
- Camp and build temporary shelters for camping;
- Hunt, fish and gather for personal, domestic and non-commercial communal purposes;
- Take, use and have natural resources for similar purposes;
- Conduct rituals and ceremonies;
- Be buried within the area;
- Maintain and protect places of cultural significance;
- Teach on the area;
- Hold meetings; and
- Light fires for personal and domestic purposes including cooking, but not for hunting or clearing vegetation.

The determination of this Native Title Claim set up a new Prescribed Body Corporate for the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation and they will manage the issues arising from the new Butchulla responsibilities including land use issues such as the George Haddock Track passing through new territory.

FIDO welcomes the consent and the restoration of some previous Butchulla rights and we look forward to working closely and cooperatively with the Butchulla to protect Fraser Island from unnatural impacts into the future together.

The Legends of Moonie Jarl

The Butchulla euphoria over gain Native title was still strongly evident in Hervey Bay on 7th November when the book of children's stories, "*Legends of Moonie Jarl*" was re-launched 50 years after it was first published. The intriguing stories about the Aboriginal dreamtime have been born again, more than 50 years after they first appeared in print. The collection of 12 traditional stories of the people from Fraser Island and the mainland around Hervey Bay was written by Wilf Reeves and illustrated by his sister Olga Miller in 1964.

Although originally published by Jacaranda Press and was an outstanding publishing success, being the first book of children's stories ever published it went out of print after Jacaranda Press was absorbed into Wiley. It is now published by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation which has publishing indigenous community stories was a significant part of the foundation's role.

The re-publication gives the Butchulla even more reasons to be justifiably proud of their culture and traditions.

Photo Right Shelter at Bogimbah, Fraser Island (John Oxley Library) Many Aborigines died in the appalling living conditions at this "mission" between 1897 and 1904

History of Butchulla since Contact

The first reported contact with Butchulla came from convicts who had escaped the brutality at Moreton Bay. The next was the saga of Eliza Fraser in 1836. Following the settlement of the Mary River district beginning in 1842, interracial conflict and "dispersal" took a heavy toll on the Butchulla. This continued following the discovery of Gympie gold in 1867. There was briefly some attempt to protect the Butchulla when Rev Fuller established a Mission at Balarrgan (North White Cliffs) in 1871, but his mission was soon commandeered by the Queensland Government to be used as a quarantine Station. The Butchulla were evicted. The end of the gold rush made Ballargan available again. So in 1897 the Queensland Government established a secular Mission there. When some Maryborough residents making a picnic trip to K'Gari over Easter, Aborigines prevented them landing on the Balarrgan beach. The picnickers were outraged. They claimed that Balarrgan had been "*a favourite resort for pleasure parties for over twenty years*" and a popular "*watering place since before Queensland got separation*".

A public protest meeting held in Maryborough drew 300 to 400 people. Within months, as a result of parochial pressures the Aboriginal mission was transferred to a less desirable site near the mouth of Bogimbah Creek. There was an extremely high mortality rate at the Bogimbah Mission. During its seven-year existence, 56 Aborigines were buried in one cemetery and 38 were buried in another.

Graves: In the 1970s FIDO safarists could distinguish the outline of sunken graves in an area near the mouth of Bogimbah Creek. They were clearly identifiable then. In the decades since there have been frustrating attempts to rediscover the precise burial place of an unknown numbers of Butchulla. Last July local Aboriginal rangers were joined by a team of scientists from the University of the Sunshine Coast and use ground-penetrating radar to detect final resting place of about 70 Aborigines.



Queensland's Transformed Political Scene

FIDO was appalled at the speed and extent of the dismantling and removal of environmental protection measures during the less than three year term of the Newman Government and the indications were that it could well get worse if the Newman Government had a second term. The January elections saw one of the most remarkable political turn-arounds in Australian history. The electorate at large shared FIDO's concerns about the direction of government. As a result we now have a new ALP Palaszczuk Government in a finely poised Parliament. It is an outcome FIDO welcomes but we want better environmental protection measures restored as soon as possible.

The prospects didn't look good at the end of 2014. FIDO's January E-News No 2 said: *If the Newman Government is re-elected:*

- *There is no hope of advancing Cooloola's World Heritage claim. There is no intention to renominate the Great Sandy Region and Gondwana Rainforests to recognize additional values;*
- *Government funding for Queensland conservation groups will continue to suffer;*
- *Fraser Island will be no better resourced with funds or staff;*
- *There is no prospect at all of getting a Fraser Island Visitor Centre;*
- *Queensland's natural environment especially the Great Barrier Reef will suffer while more resources are directed to help coal and CSG mining;*
- *The downgrading of the environment will suffer through a continuation of the administrative arrangements with split responsibilities.*

We should have added that there was also a threat to take Fraser Island's water to supply the Fraser Coast's urban populations and there was no hope of seeing a new Management Plan for the Great Sandy Region despite this now being years overdue. There are many new factors that need to be taken into consideration including Native Title.

A good start has been made with the appointment of Dr. Steven Miles as Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef. While not entirely reunited, both QPWS sections are now working more closely in the one Ministry.



24th October 2014 was a day for celebration at Kingfisher Resort when the Butchulla finally got back native title for their precious K'Gari. Now the Butchulla need to be consulted when decisions are made affecting over 95% of Kgari

Overdue Issues

Reviving K'Gari's Light Rail

By an amazing opportunity FIDO may soon be in a position to initiate a detailed Feasibility Plan to investigate the proposed route, environmental impact's Native title issues and economic viability of a light rail across Fraser Island. FIDO is one of three beneficiaries to the will of an Australian woman Barbara Winkley who lived in Anchorage, Alaska but who loved the Australian environment with a passion. FIDO is committed to using this bequest to underwrite the cost of carrying out a detailed feasibility study into the options for a light rail but the oversight for the study will be the Queensland Government.

FIDO plans to reach an agreement with the Palaszczuk Government to oversee this study to sort out the obstacles to reducing the impact on Fraser Island (K'Gari)'s roads by establishing a cross-island rail route from Kingfisher Resort to Eurong via Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) and Central Station. If it is then deemed feasible and acceptable the government will then call for Expressions of Interests for a private operator to build and operate the line. This would enable prospective tenderers to work out a business model and have certainty that their plan would have the Go-ahead if their tender succeeded.

Until the estate of Barbara Winkley is settled FIDO can do no more than foreshadow our plans. Like any prospective light rail operator we need certainty before we can make a commitment but the bequest could be a game changer and finally see a more sustainable way for Fraser Island (K'Gari) visitation become a reality.

Other Overdue Projects

WH for Cooloola and Great Sandy Strait

Australia has only two World Heritage proposals in the Indicative World Heritage List that is a pre-requisite to their formal nomination. The re-nomination of the Great Sandy Region to recognize extra values for Fraser Island and to add Cooloola, Great Sandy Strait was ignored by the Newman Government. Now this important can move forward again.

A New Great Sandy Region Management Plan

The 1994 Management Plan was reviewed in 2005 without any consultation outside the bureaucracy. It was intended to develop a new Management Plan by 2010 when this current plan was due to expire. The attempts to have a new Management Plan had begun before the election of the Newman Government but any idea of a Management Plan that might prevent rash political decisions died in 2012. FIDO is urging that the planning process should resume as soon as possible. It will allow the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation to have a direct input into the plan and allow the QPWS who are responsible for implementing it to have certainty over the policies that they are implementing.

Fraser Island and World Heritage status

World Heritage branding: For some time FIDO has questioned where the UNESCO World Heritage brass plate that we expected to have been provided after the 1992 listing was hiding. The truth was that the obligation is on the State Parties (Australia) to provide this critical badge and for more than 22 years the Australian Government has treated Fraser Island with such indifference that it hasn't even bothered to ensure that the World Heritage badge that should have been provided was ever installed. We did learn however that when Fraser Island was inscribed in the World Heritage List in the 1992 meeting in Santa Fe (USA) UNESCO issued a certificate. FIDO is seeking to find out where that certificate, that is so that this document that is so highly prized by other World Heritage sites is held so that it can be prominently displayed on Fraser Island.

1007 sites are on the World Heritage list —779 cultural, 197 natural, and 31 mixed properties. While Fraser Island is currently meets three of the four natural criteria, FIDO anticipates that if the Queensland Government proceeds with the re-nomination of the Great Sandy Region the whole region could be deemed a mixed site. Sites meeting natural criteria account for only **23%** of all 1007 World Heritage properties that protect **over 279 million hectares** of land and sea and represent over **10%** of the total area of all recorded protected areas. There are 70 Natural areas in Australia's region (Asia and the Pacific).

IUCN's K'Gari Report Card

As described elsewhere in this MOONBI, the objective assessment of every natural World Heritage site, including Australia's, is included in IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2014 that was launched at the World Parks Congress in Sydney. Despite the diplomatic niceties, it seems Australia needs to lift its game in management of a number of its World Heritage sites.

Conservation Outlook: Unlike other Australian World Heritage sites, Fraser Island is *rated "Good with some concerns"*. It shares that ranking with other natural Australian properties, Gondwana Rainforest, Greater Blue Mountains, Macquarie Island, and the Tasmanian Wilderness. Fraser Island doesn't have the top level of rating which is "*Good*" that was given to eight (8) other Australian World Heritage sites. Given the lack of resources provided to manage Fraser Island *rated "Good with some concerns"* isn't surprising. However it is better than three Australian World Heritage sites, Kakadu, Great Barrier Reef and Queensland's Wet Tropics that are placed in the "*Significant Concern*" category.

The full assessment of all natural World Heritage sites can be found at: <http://worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org>

The Concerns: Specific concerns about Fraser Island expressed in the Conservation Outlook Report were:

Fraser Island has been viewed as a model in participatory conservation management between many different stakeholders and a number of excellent management plans for a variety of issues have been put in place. The state of the site's World Heritage values remains relatively good and significant human and financial resources are being directed to the management of the threats to these values. However, high levels of visitation and pressures from recreational use will require continuing monitoring and increased management efforts to ensure preservation of the site's values in the long-term.

The current state and Trend of Fraser Island WH values were judged to be of "Low Concern"

Since inscription in 1992 the state of World Heritage values remains relatively good and significant human and financial resources are being directed to the management of the threats to these values. Although the state of World Heritage values remains relatively good, although two of the six values indicate some deterioration, and it is possible that the other four values may not be stable if management concerns are correct.

Overall Threats were judged to be "High Threat"

Increased visitation and climate change are the two major threats to the property. Increased tourism is acting as a driver for a number of other threats, which include pollution, siltation, disturbance, and the introduction of invasive species. Management capacity is high but significant negative effects on the site's values and integrity is probable unless management is increased. Climate change seems to be irreversibly changing some of the physical properties of the site has already been demonstrated as a threat to several of the values of the property, and will probably gain in importance in the future.

Overall Protection and management of Fraser Island's WH was judged to be "Effective"

Protection and management is mostly effective. However, high levels of visitation and pressures from recreational use will require continuing monitoring and increased management efforts to ensure preservation of the site's values in the long-term.



World Heritage logo: While the central square symbolizes the results of human skill and inspiration, the circle celebrates the gifts of nature. The emblem is round, like the world, a symbol of global protection for the heritage of all humankind.

Lacking Statistics for K'Gari

Although QPWS media releases advise that Fraser Island (K'Gari) is Queensland's most popular National Park there has been no disclosure of the number of visitors for almost a decade. It seems almost inconceivable that the organization charged with responsibility for managing the site does not collect and divulge such vital statistics. Claims that visitation to the island is 350,000 to 400,000 is pure guesswork. More reliable figures are demanded.

In 1997, over 3000 Australians nominated Fraser Island as their favourite "Place in the Heart". It clearly topped the poll conducted by the Australian Heritage Commission beating the Great Barrier Reef and Port Arthur. Despite this widespread public affection Fraser Island remains the most under-resourced World Heritage site in Australia.

World Parks Congress in Sydney, November 2014

By John Sinclair, FIDO's WPC delegate

The Sydney World Parks Congress (WPC) had changed so much in the 32 years since I attended the Bali congress in 1982 that I could not help but focus on some of the glaring differences. The Bali WPC was attended by about 350 (predominantly male) delegates and was able to be staged in the confines of the Bali International Hotel in Sanur. It was so informal that you got to meet most of the other delegates either in sessions or over the morning tea or during the number of dinner receptions provided. Every delegate was given a kit containing all of the paper and tools needed to follow and appreciate this wonderful event.

The Sydney WPC needed the sprawling Sydney Showgrounds to provide the multiple venues for the numerous events proceeding concurrently and it needed a smart phone or tablet to keep track of the complex program for almost 6,000 delegates representing over 120 nations. Unsurprisingly about 40% of the delegates were Australian. It was difficult to recognize the Sydney event as a successor to Bali 32 years earlier. The intimacy had gone. The interaction between delegates was much less. The incredibly crowded agenda ran from 7.00am to 9.30 pm with often as many as a dozen sessions running simultaneously. Small wonder that people needed the latest technology to keep abreast of the program. Most delegates carried personal computers; whereas in 1982 there were none. Unfortunately computers were less common amongst delegates from poorer or non-English-speaking countries

While the timing of the event meant that it clashed with and was overshadowed by the international events in our region — APEC where the USA and China announced agreement on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the circus of the G20 in Brisbane and the signing of the China Australian free-trade agreement. Sadly the Queensland Government missed an opportunity to showcase Queensland National Parks with a stall as did other Australian states. However 13 QPWS Rangers did attend although no one more senior QPWS officers even though this congress was so close to home. DEHP was appropriately represented and made a couple of presentations featuring Fraser Island, neatly avoiding exposing any embarrassments.

FIDO's interest in the Congress focussed on World Heritage, the role of volunteers in Protected Areas, the impact of invasive species (weeds and fauna pests) and in inspiring a new generation. FIDO gained lot of useful background and information that will assist us in fashioning our future program to help protect our particular Protected Area that also happens to be a World Heritage area. We were particularly impressed by the release of the first IUCN World Heritage Outlook Report that was a conservation assessment of all natural World Heritage sites. (See p4). It appears though, that there were at many sessions that we could have benefitted from but reluctantly we had to miss them due to overlapping/clashing times.

There were many issues that we had hoped to see on the agenda that didn't appear such as even the mention of the word "Antarctica" that seemed to be a taboo subject. Another taboo subject avoided was "population". Despite these shortcomings the conference provided some opportunity for networking.

Sue Sargent Heads up AWHAC

Sue Sargent is the Chair of the Fraser Island Community Advisory Committee. She represented Fraser Island World Heritage Area at Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC). At the meeting of AWHAC at Sydney Opera House recently, Sue was elected as its Chair of this group that represents each Australian World Heritage property and provides a forum for Australia's World Heritage site managers to share information on best practice management and to encourage continual improvement for the protection of our valuable World Heritage properties. This honorary, 3-year position will see Sue providing advice (on behalf of the committee) to the Federal Minister for the Environment.

Cooloola deserves much better

NPA's Golden Anniversary: As FIDO has just turned 44 (January, 2015) our sister group, Noosa Parks Association, the guardians of Cooloola, have just celebrated their 50th Anniversary with the release of Tony Wellington's impressive coffee table book, "*Noosa and Cooloola*". Tony says, "*Both Fraser Island and Cooloola were viewed initially as timber and subsequently mineral resources, not the geological marvels we now understand them to be. Together Fraser Island and Cooloola present the largest vegetated dune system on the planet. While Fraser Island was the first an locale to be listed on the Register of the National Estate, receiving World Heritage listing in 1992, its sibling Cooloola has at times been left sitting on the proverbial bench holding an empty dance card.*"

It is not only FIDO supporting the re-nomination of the Great Sandy Region to include Cooloola for World Heritage. The Joint Indigenous, Scientific and Community Advisory Committees unanimously urged former Minister Powell to proceed with the nomination. He refused to advance the well developed case. FIDO will be urging new Environment Minister Steven Miles to act now.

Visitor Centre for K'Gari Overdue

A succession of Queensland Government's have failed to provide a proper Visitor Centres for any Queensland National Park. Any interstate traveller must be appalled by the lack of interpretation of our parks when they have seen the stunning displays that help them gain a much richer interpretation of the outstanding natural features of other. The Aquarium at Townsville is the Visitor Centre for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the reef generally. It demonstrates the economic benefits through tourism of establishing a top Visitor Centre. Many people spend an extra day in Townsville just to take in this centre and it is worth millions of dollars to Townsville's economy. We would like to see a similar facility for Fraser Island, Queensland's most popular National Park. As the Townsville Aquarium demonstrates it does not need to be located within the World Heritage area and could be sited in Hervey Bay or Maryborough.

FIDO has proposed that the new Queensland Government establish one new Visitor Centre for a major Queensland national parks each year with Fraser Island being the first cab off the rank.

Everyone's Environment (except FIDO's and Fraser Island)

117 recipients shared almost \$5 million to undertake projects with funding from the Newman Government's 2014 Everyone's Environment program, but not a cent was allocated for Fraser Island despite applications.

FIDO punished: We were told that FIDO's applications weren't considered because although we met all the guidelines for grant applications, FIDO is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. It seems that the DEHP was either picking on FIDO unjustly or nobody had checked FIDO's credentials as a not-for-profit *bona fide* conservation organization. There was no consultation or contact and FIDO was denied natural justice. We considered seeking an administrative review but the cost and the time lag made this impractical. We do demand though fairer treatment by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection when they deal with future applications by FIDO.

While very large grants were dished out, FIDO made two extremely modest proposals for grants. We applied for a mere \$4,800 to develop an innovative interpretation program at Wabby Lakes and \$4,000 to assist with the organizing of our 6th Biennial Fraser Island Conference — "*Sand Sea and Sun*". No consideration was given to them.

K'Gari — Fraser Island Logo

Throughout 2014, FIDO worked to develop a logo that can be used to help identify and interpret the World Heritage values of Fraser Island. It has been a difficult and challenging task carried out with enormous cooperation of Kara from Gympie Graphics. Before we can release and launch the logo we are determined to have the most widespread acceptance of the logo. It isn't a FIDO logo but should belong to all Fraser Island stakeholders. That is why we are seeking Butchulla input to the proposed logo. It is hoped to launch the new logo at the Fraser Island Conference at the University of the Sunshine Coast on 12th August.

Walking Tracks finally reopen

Fraser Island's Great Walk remained closed for several months over the entire summer because it wasn't deemed a very high priority to reopen it. Roads apparently are a much higher priority. Since it was created, there have been several extended periods when the walk has been closed and this creates greater uncertainty for people pursuing a different pattern of recreation on K'Gari. FIDO hopes the prolonged closure of walking tracks won't apply to the George Haddock Track. In the meantime FIDO will be working with QPWS to seek a solution to the lack of resources that mean walking tracks are not needlessly closed for indefinite periods.

News In Brief

There is discussion afoot on bringing cruise ships to Hervey Bay and Fraser Island. — It is 80 years since the Maheno went aground and it will be remembered as an ANZAC hospital ship on the centenary of the Gallipoli landing. — Scientists have been tracking three tiger sharks caught off Fraser Island to learn more about their behaviour. — One Red Emperor caught and released near the Wide Bay Bar in 2004 was caught off Indian Head in 2015. In the interim it had grown from 44 cms long to 75-80 cms weighing in at 6.5 kg. — A monster Eastern Shovelnose Ray was caught and released off Fraser Island beach in January.

All is Forgiven

During the 1970s John Sinclair was deemed a pariah by a significant part of Maryborough's population because of his strong advocacy for the protection of Fraser Island from industrial exploitation. Even the Maryborough's University Society refused to place his name on the University Centre Honour Board recognizing Maryborough based graduates. They chose to ignore that he had completed ten years studying for his Bachelor of Economics degree entirely as an external student while living and working in Maryborough.

After four decades things have changed. In February 2014 John Sinclair was honoured in his hometown when the Regional Council placed a plaque in Maryborough's Walk of Achievers in the Historic Wharf Street Precinct. **The canon was fired, proclamations read, the pipe band played and all past differences were forgiven.** Many Maryborough dignitaries including Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, the Mayor and Councilors were there for the occasion. It was a very happy reconciliation.



Review Tag-Along Operations

There are several good sane Backpacker tours of Fraser Island (K'Gari) providing wonderful Fraser Island experiences for overseas travellers but it is time to review some operations particularly the tag along tours. Some of these are led by leaders more interested in partying than responsibility.

Despite Tagalong tours being introduced in 2010 it took one operator 4 years to finally comply with a requirement to provide toilets at campsites. An international journalist was told to "*go 'in nature' for ... toilet business*". (Not good).

More distressing are the number of injuries vehicle accidents on the Tag Along tours. Last October 22yo Jade Fox was killed and other serious injuries occurred when a 19-year old driver attempted to overtake another vehicle on the old mining road. In February five people had to be helicoptered to hospital when a 4WD driven by a 20-year old Englishwoman rolled over on the beach near the Maheno.

FIDO believes that it is time to review the competence of current Tag Along tour leaders. Also needing URGENT review is the practice of allowing young inexperienced drivers to take the wheel of vehicles probably more fully loaded than anything they have ever driven before and on sand. It isn't good for Australian tourism to send visitors on a Tag Along tour home in a body bag or bearing the scars of traumatic injuries that could have been avoided.

Sand, Sea and Sun
6th Biennial Fraser Island Conference
Innovation Centre — University of the Sunshine Coast
Wednesday, 12th August, 2015 — 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

FIDO's previous Fraser Island conferences *2020 Vision* (Noosa 2004), *True Grit* (USC 2006), *Shifting Sands* (The Gap 2009) *FIDO @ 40* (The Gap 2011), *A Natural Laboratory* (Mt Coo-tha 2013) have dealt with a range of themes. An exciting program coinciding with Brisbane's Ekka holiday is now taking shape.

The Theme

Our Sixth Great Sandy Conference promises to be our best yet. There is a new layer of responsibility now that the Butchulla have Native Title over K'Gari that they may have occupied for 40,000 years. Very eminently qualified speakers will make presentations to the conference that will help to understand Fraser Island's World Heritage Outstanding Universal Value. New insights should assist in improving the management of this site. The theme aims to increase our understanding of the geomorphology, the marine environment and the impacts of climate change. It also allows scope to discuss the natural beauty of the site that is one of Fraser Island's three World Heritage criteria.

Keynote Speaker

Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe

Author, academic, researcher and gifted speaker, Ian Lowe's principal research interests are in policy decisions influencing the use of energy, science and technology; energy use in industrialised countries; large-scale environmental issues and sustainable development. He was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2001 for services to science and technology and for contributing to public understanding of environmental issues. Ian is the Immediate Past President of the Australian Conservation Foundation and has long been focused on the impacts of Climate Change.

Sand: Over 30 years a CSIRO team carried out their ground breaking studies in Cooloola that has helped our understanding of so much of the complexities of this part of the Great Sandy Region. They helped unravel and understand the chronosequences of dune systems. A team of scientists mainly from University of Queensland led Prof Jamie Schulmeister is about to embark on a multidisciplinary study of Fraser Island that rivals that of the CSIRO Cooloola dune studies in breadth and scope. Prof Jamie Schulmeister's asks the key question "*Is the answer blowing in the wind? — Towards an environmental history of the Fraser Island/K'gari dune fields*".

Sea: The Marine Environment of the Fraser Island Region features strongly. Dr Joachim Ribbe, Associate Professor in Climatology, USQ, has made some most interesting recent discoveries. These include the "Southeast Fraser Island Upwelling System" and the classification of Hervey Bay as a hypersaline system. Great Sandy Strait will also get a very full treatment. It is an appropriate topic on what is being done to *keep Great Sandy Strait Great?* Great Sandy Strait is an internationally important wetland and one of the most significant migratory shorebird sites in Australia. Up to 40,000 shorebirds have used this location during the Australian summer. Dr. Jon Coleman (Queensland Wader Study Group) will report on 20 years of observations.

Sun: There will be discussions on climate change and fire. Core sampling in the fens has revealed "*evidence of significant environmental change, possibly associated with human arrival, between 40,000 to 35,000 years ago*" and other changes indicating different climate regimes of the past. In November 2013 FIDO was privileged to assist in a detailed study of the Puthoo Fens near Moon Point. Dr Patrick Moss has titled his paper *Moon Point Mires – A 40,000 year window into the Fraser Island environment*. Two papers arise from work in the fens. Another presentation deals with *Fire Patterns of the Great Sandy Region*.



There has been much interesting research carried out in the Fraser Island fens in recent years. The International Mire Conservation Group came in 2013. This team from University of Queensland led by Dr. Patrick Moss is examining a peat core extracted from the Puthoo fens that help us understand the ecological history going back 40,000 years

As well we are looking forward to presentations from government agencies, (yet to be confirmed) and discussions on Dingoes, Dilli Village, the role of volunteers and the significance of the rainforest flora. It promises to be a full and fascinating day of expanding our knowledge and understanding of this unique part of the globe.

COST: All of this information and stimulating discussion, a light lunch and morning and afternoon tea costs a registration fee of only \$100. (\$80 for FIDO members, \$60 for students and concessions).

On line registrations can be made at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/6th-biennial-fraser-island-conference-tickets-16152826539>

Organized by Fraser Island Defenders Organisation

Supported by

FINIA (Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance) and
University of the Sunshine Coast

FIDO Volunteer Programs for the rest of 2015

FIDO's volunteer program in 2014 achieved remarkable outcomes. We organized ten week-long working bees on Fraser Island in 2014 contributing over 3000 hours of on-ground voluntary work. This ignores the time spent in administration and travel to and from the island by more than 100 volunteers. Three teams led by John Sinclair continuing a well-developed program tackled the urban weeds of Eurong. Peter Shooter led three teams tackling the more challenging task of Happy Valley weeds. In addition FIDO organized in conjunction with National Parks Association of Queensland for four working bees to work on the 52 kilometre George Haddock Track extension of the Fraser Island Great Walk.



FIDO is dependent on volunteers to help us maintain the natural integrity of Fraser Island (K'Gari). FIDO has been addressing the problems of weeds in the townships, the main centres of infestation, since soon after Fraser Island (Kgari) obtained World Heritage status. We have stepped up the effort in more recent years due to the urgency of the problem in Eurong and Happy Valley the two oldest settlements.

The working bees are so enjoyable and satisfying that many volunteers are returning more than once. (Some are regulars). As a result more recently our logistics have been unable to cater for all of the applications. Our vehicle capacity has reduced group sizes to five volunteers and a leader unless others can assist with 4WD transport for which we can obtain exemptions from access and ferry fees. Then the limiting factor becomes the number of beds. Note: Volunteers need to provide their own towels and bed linen.

Details of past working bees based at Eurong can be found at www.fido.org.au. Photo albums of each of the weeding operations and excursions can be found on John Sinclair's Picasa Web page. We aim for a similar number in 2015 although so far we have set the dates for only the first of these enjoyable projects. These projects are funded with grants from the Burnett Mary Regional Group for natural resource management. FIDO asks volunteers to contract to undertake a minimum of 20 hours voluntary work.

Weeding Method: While many of the weeds can be uprooted in some cases this is impractical and we need to use chemical herbicides to control the weeds. **Areas sprayed are identified with dye. We need volunteers for carrying heavy spray backpacks to undertake this vital work.**

The Contract: FIDO provides the transport, catering and accommodation in a shared house. Volunteers are asked in return that to contribute at least an average of 4-5 hours per day of on-the-ground work. In the daylight downtime FIDO will take volunteers on tours of World Heritage Fraser Island. That is the contract volunteers sign up for.

Registration: Each volunteer is covered by our public liability and personal accident policies but each must complete and post in a signed Application Form. These may be attached but they can also be obtained on line at www.fido.org.au or by emailing john@sinclair.org.au to obtain a PDF version. Volunteers can only be registered for insurance coverage by completing this Application Form.



Happy Valley Programs

10th to 16th May, 16th to 22nd August, and 8th to 14th November 2015 (All Sunday to Saturday)

Peter Shooter will continue to lead groups in 2015 to help tackle the heavy weed infestation in and around Happy Valley. Groups of 6 will share one of the comfortable holiday houses in Happy Valley. People wishing to take the their own Teams will continue to focus on containing a particularly aggressive weed with poisonous seeds, *Abrus prectorius* that is heavily impacting on the vegetation. *Abrus* isn't found anywhere else on Fraser Island. While *Abrus* is our top priority was are focused on ridding other priority weeds including Easter Cassia, lantana and Mile a Minute just to name a few in the process.

Eurong

24th to 30th May (Sunday to Saturday), 25th July to 1st August and 24th October to 1st November (both Saturday to Sunday)

John Sinclair and Su Dawson will retire from personally leading the Eurong Tours after May to concentrate on other Fraser Island projects being developed although they may continue to join in. Maree Prior who has a long history of organizing Landcare programs in Noosa and Cooloola areas will be leading these programs in the second half of the year. The Eurong program will be based at "Talinga", the former Sinclair family home in Eurong Village and will mainly focus on weeding and bush regeneration in Eurong as well as continuing our Eurong program also includes landscaping to preserve the island's natural integrity. These are FIDO's on-going environmental monitoring programs. John Sinclair will be pleased to show volunteers as much of Fraser Island as is possible in the time and he knows the island better than anyone else.

Volunteers to work on George Haddock Track

FIDO remains confident that we will be able to resume the exciting work of building the George Haddock Track and infrastructure by the end of this year. We will advise all registered volunteers as soon as practical to do so.