



## Fraser Island Defenders Organisation

*FIDO — The Watchdog of Fraser Island*

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**Aim:** To ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

### Media Release

For immediate Release — Friday 23 April 2009

## Backpackers want Fraser walking tours

**The Fraser Island Defenders Organisation is calling on tour operators to provide a better alternative for backpackers to explore Fraser Island instead of being crowded into unstable and unsafe 4WDs.**

The Fraser Island Defenders Organisation's Project Officer, John Sinclair said that the recent series of very serious accidents involving backpacker driven vehicles on Fraser Island demonstrated that alternative means of allowing backpackers to explore Fraser Island were urgently needed.

He said that a 2005 investigation showed that almost 70% backpackers who were travelling in packed troop-carriers would have preferred to be hiking rather than being cramped in a vehicle they were unable to see out from

The School for International Training supervised study interviewed 283 backpackers on Fraser Island tours and found that most would have preferred to be hiking rather than being carried in uncomfortable vehicles but that they were unaware of the hiking options.

John Sinclair said that there were wonderful opportunities for hiking on Fraser Island that would meet backpacker desires but sellers of backpacker tours have not seen as much profit in selling hiking packages as there was in selling self-drive tour packages.

"Fraser Island has Queensland's most popular of Great Walk but the backpackers get sold \$140 self-drive tours for before they get anywhere near the island and can't then take advantage of alternative options," Mr Sinclair said.

The SIT study revealed that over 60 % of backpackers on self-drive tours claimed to have had problems with their self-drive packages including 58.3% who claimed to have some sort of vehicle problem. Mr Sinclair said that there was a huge untapped market of backpackers looking for tour packages on Fraser Island that involved more hiking and less travel in cramped troop-carriers that have proven to be fatally unstable when fully loaded.

Mr Sinclair was supported by Cr Sue Brooks from Fraser Coast Regional Council who still treasures memories of walking New Zealand's Routeburn Track as an 18 year old back packer who said that walking is an environmentally friendly activity that should be prioritised on Fraser Island.

Cr Brooks wants Fraser Island walking trails to incorporate overnight accommodation in huts to provide a more attractive means for visitors to experience our world famous heritage listed, sand island. and to make it a 'must do' for many of our International and interstate visitors"

*"Backpackers would jump at budget walking tours if their heavier gear could be carried between camps for them and it is a business opportunity on Fraser Island that has gone begging for far too long,"* Mr Sinclair said.

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