



MOONBI 111

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, PO Box 70, BALD HILLS QLD 4036

FIDO, "The Watchdog of Fraser Island", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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Since MOONBI 110

In the period from April to November 2005 when MOONBI 110 went to press there have been many significant developments impacting on the future of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region. These include some good news and some bad news.

Of FIDO's many projects and preoccupations in this period two have been preeminent —the Great Sandy Marine Park and Weeds,

Great Sandy Marine Park: A huge amount of energy not only by FIDO but from other conservation groups in South East Queensland has been applied to the campaign "Greening the Great Sandy". This is to enlarge the miniscule 3.81% of the Great Sandy Marine Park which has been allocated as a green or "no-take" zone. We thought that the Beattie Government's only 3.81% as Green zone in the Draft Plan was a simple mistake that would be easily remedied when the government realized how critical the Marine Park is. Instead it seems to be locked into a non-negotiable position of ignoring the regions' outstanding values and offering the public a Clayton's Marine Park with a negligible area actually being set aside as Marine National Park. Story on pp 8 and more details on NPAQ Web site at: www.npaq.org.au/Great_Sandy/GGSreport.pdf

Weeds: Weeds are an insidious threat of ever increasing significance and pose a significant threat to Fraser Island's integrity. Our war on weeds has four major strands:

1. Seeking to cooperate with other major stakeholders (particularly the two local authorities in Maryborough and Hervey Bay) to address the issue. This has involved us in meetings, inspections, and workshops and we can see positive and encouraging responses;
2. Building FIDO's capacity to be better placed to conduct our war on weeds. We have acquired tools and equipment and now have access to a 4WD to enable us to conduct working bees much more easily;
3. A public education program: FIDO is cooperating with the Councils and others to produce and distribute a weed booklet to all residents (fewer than 100) and landholders (some hundreds) to alert them to the problems of the weeds and seeking their cooperation to address the problem of urban weeds in this World Heritage area.
4. FIDO has coordinated our biggest yet weed attack in October when a team of experienced bush regenerators (mainly from NSW) put in 400 hours eliminating weeds in a small part of Eurong (Story pp 4-5) FIDO is planning four more working bees of 12 days each in 2006 in addition to the return of the bush regenerating team who set such a great model for others to follow.

Another project has been to respond to the insights provided by FIDO's 2004 Conference on "A 20-20 Vision for Fraser Island" as well as advance the planning for our next Fraser Island Conference in conjunction with the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee on 28-29 September 2006 on the theme of "Maintaining the Natural Integrity". See Story p6.

Other issues which have been simmering along include our plans to address the problem of toads on Fraser Island (See p) our project to see a light rail system installed on Fraser Island (sooner rather than later).



Indian Head in 1973. This was when it was still pristine and grass grew right to the summit. Since then all of the grass and soil on the top has been eroded away by pedestrian traffic and this is now the most severely degraded site on all of Fraser Island. It is in critical need of much better management.



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PROMISES, PROMISES, PROMISES

A promise is a promise. However, there seems to be some selectivity and a fair degree of flexibility when Premier Beattie's promises are either disregarded or discarded by his Government.

It is interesting to note that Premier Beattie recently rejected the proposition that daylight saving be reintroduced in Queensland on the basis that he 'keeps his promises'.

However, FIDO's experience with respect to the premier's specific promises for Fraser Island is that the premier doesn't keep his word or even apologize for his government's blatantly disregarding a firm undertaking which had taken years to obtain. In February 2001 he made the following categorical core promise during his first Election Campaign. He undertook that his government would be:

- * *Giving statutory recognition to Queensland's responsibility to fulfill our obligations under the World Heritage Convention to formulate and implement WHA Management Plans that give priority to the protection and conservation of World Heritage values while presenting those values to the best advantage;*
- * *Giving legislative effect to World Heritage Area Management Plans to ensure their planning policy and principles are reflected in local planning schemes and considered in the assessment of development applications, and*
- * *Giving priority to implementing the Great Sandy Region Management Plan (including bringing Fraser Island under the planning control of a single government agency) and finalize submissions necessary to expand the Fraser Island World Heritage area to incorporate the entire Great Sandy Region including Cooloolo National Park.*

It is obvious now from the adoption of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan that the Beattie Government has no intention of implementing that CORE PROMISE to give "*legislative effect to World Heritage Area Management Plans.*"

Queensland legislation requires that the Environment Minister must, as soon as practicable, prepare a management plan for an area dedicated as (a) national park (scientific), (b) national park, (c) national park (recovery), (d) conservation park, (e) resources reserve, (f) coordinated conservation area or (g) wilderness area.

On 26 May the Minister was asked what the status of Management Plans for each of those reserves was. The answer was that only 37 of the 186 protected areas in Queensland, which should have Management Plans, actually did have one. The minister told Parliament that of the 149 reserves for which Management Plans were to be completed, one was the 219992 hectare Great Sandy National Park.

It is obvious that the QPWS doesn't like being tied down by firm rules of management plans prescribe. Bureaucrats like the flexibility of being able to change the rules to suit themselves if the occasion arises. This has regularly occurred on Fraser Island. Statutory Management Plans prevent that. That seems to be why, unlike other states, Queensland pays only token lip service to the need for Management Plans for its National Parks.

There is no evidence that following the adoption of a mid-term review of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan

(which covers urban communities Eurong, Happy Valley and Orchid Beach and unallocated State land and freehold outside the National Park) that this Plan will ever have any statutory status. This betrays the Premier's 2001 promise.

Fraser Suffers from Non Delivery

The failure to implement the promised legislation has effectively made a mockery of the Fraser Island management as many aspects continue to be openly flouted. This has been apparent for some time. While the it allows QPWS to fiddle with the intent of the written Great Sandy Region Management Plan it also allows other government agencies with responsibilities on Fraser Island to ignore their obligations under the plan. There are concrete examples of how not having legislation is impeding.

1. **Keeping domestic animals off Fraser Island:** When FIDO recently drew the attention of the QPWS to the fact that domestic cats and dogs are being openly held on Fraser Island in contravention of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan we received this reply: *The issue of domestic animals within townships/on freehold property is outside QPWS jurisdiction/legislation and is a Local Government issue. ... domestic animals require appropriate registration with the relevant Local Government. Management of domestic animals within protected areas is within QPWS jurisdiction/legislation but, until the animals are detected/located/reported on a protected area, QPWS cannot act. Please be advised that if/when domestic animals are identified/located on protected areas. Rangers are authorized to infringe and direct them from the area. Infringements have been issued in the past for this offence.*

Without giving legislative effect to World Heritage Area Management Plans to ensure their planning policy and principles are reflected in local planning schemes, the Queensland Government is incapable of preventing domestic animals being blatantly kept on Fraser Island despite the intention of the Management Plan.

2. **Garbage Collection:** There has been a standoff by both local councils anxious to avoid the expenses relative to the collection of garbage from Fraser Island. Likewise the Cooloolo Shire Council (which includes Rainbow Beach and Gympie) refuses to let any of the garbage collected from Fraser Island be deposited in its land fill dumps. It matters little that these three communities are the most direct beneficiaries of the \$277 million economic bonanza that Fraser Island generates.

Without legislation local authorities can evade their moral responsibilities on Fraser Island.

3. **Development Control:** Most visitors to Fraser Island are aghast at the inappropriateness of the buildings and development at Orchid Beach. This has come about because the Hervey Bay City Council refused to implement the Draft Development Control Plan (DCP) for the northern half of Fraser Island which the Queensland Government prepared to conform with the

Management Plan. Had the Draft DCP been implemented there would have been greater control over the size and height of buildings on Fraser Island.

Unless the Management Plan has legislative status which binds local authorities, development will continue to be controlled most inappropriately.

4. **Dingo management:** Just as QPWS Rangers are impotent to act to remove domestic pests from areas outside their direct jurisdiction, they have been equally impotent to deal with people who feed dingoes within the villages. It is well known that many people in the villages have continued to habituate “their” dingoes.
5. **Weeds:** There has been a significant amount of buck passing about who is responsible for the weeds in the townships on Fraser Island. If there was legislation it would be clear just who the buck would stop with.

It’s Not Only NO Legislation

There has been a similar consequence from the Beattie Government’s failure to honour another promise made at the same time. This was of *bringing Fraser Island under the planning control of a single government agency*. The adhocery of the present arrangements are most unsatisfactory and far from efficient. FIDO has put forward a model but with the Beattie Government’s usual inertia, while never saying “NO”, it has done nothing implement its 2001 promise on a single authority.

Everyone concerned at ensuring that Fraser Island’s outstanding natural values are best managed should be writing directly to the Premier reminding him of this categorical promises in 2001. A promise is a promise and politicians must be kept to their word. Fraser Island is suffering because this promise isn’t honoured.

What a Difference 3 Decades make



These are two photographs of the *Maheno* taken from almost the same spot after a lapse of 31 years. Above is the *Maheno* as it was in 1974. Below is the *Maheno* in 2005. Most of the superstructure has gone and the steel plates have been largely rusted and washed away. It is now 70 years since the *Maheno* was washed on to Fraser Island’s shores. Just after it was washed ashore in 1935 it was in mint condition, good enough to provide a spectacular setting for a wedding with the reception in the state room. It has deteriorated rapidly in recent years.



CANE TOAD ATTACK

As well as tackling Fraser Island’s weed problem, FIDO is also actively engaged in a collaborative effort with the QPWS and the University of the Sunshine Coast to address the cane toad problem on the island.

Cane toads have made a very significant impact on Fraser Island since their self introduction from the adjacent mainland. This has occurred within living memory. Since then quolls have disappeared, reptile populations, particularly death adders, have been significantly reduced and a wide range of other wildlife has been impacted. Unfortunately because there was so little research and gathering of baseline data, we must rely on anecdotal reports of what the wildlife of Fraser Island was like prior to the appearance of cane toads and it is obvious that cane toads have had and are still having a significant impact.

FIDO doesn’t believe that nothing can be done. In an attempt to restore the pre-toad integrity of Fraser Island, FIDO has donated three cane toad traps to be trialed on Fraser Island.

Frogwatch in the Northern Territory has developed toad traps over the past two years to fight the cane toad invasion which has been devastating the wildlife of the Top End. They have discovered that by installing UV (disco) lights, the traps draw toads from up to 500 metres away. In field testing of the traps at Ringwood Station, Frogwatch has removed more than 2,500 toads. Comparison with the nearby control site indicates that the traps had removed about 70% of the local cane toad population.

FIDO’s collaborative effort with the University of the Sunshine Coast and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service initially involves trialing three of these innovative Northern Territory cane toad traps on Fraser Island. Both our partners in the trials have permanent staff in location and have electricity supplies to maintain the lights which are the main attractants to the toads.

It is anticipated that the University of the Sunshine Coast will trial them at both Dilli Villi and Kingfisher Resort and the QPWS will trial them at Eurong and other ranger stations such as Central Station, Dundubara and Waddy Point sites to see how practical it is to control the cane toads on the island. If they work well and show promise of making significant reductions in cane toad populations, we will follow up with further trials, including using solar powered traps at remoter locations.

Pest management is a major on-going issue on Fraser Island and one which FIDO is happy to actively assist with because unless they are controlled, introduced pests can change the island ecology and threaten some the World Heritage values.



Maheno — Soon be a bulldozed heap of rust on the beach?

Maintaining Fraser's Integrity

Having spent more than 20 years advocating to have Fraser Island's World Heritage values recognized and properly protected, FIDO is not going to sit idly by and see those outstanding values over-run through introduced alien fauna and flora invaders. FIDO is advancing this agenda on three fronts. Firstly we are hoping for urgent reinforcements for the Great Weed Attack which has been underway for some time. Secondly we are trialing a new weapon on the worst feral animal on Fraser Island — cane toads and hope to be able make advances on this front. Also in cooperation with the Scientific Advisory Committee we are holding a Conference on 28th and 29th September on what is and can be done to maintain Fraser Island's integrity. The conference will be followed by a weekend field trip to the island to look at issues discussed during the Conference at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

FIDO's Great Weed Attack

Two Main Targets: Eurong & Happy Valley

FIDO's main focus on Fraser Island weeds is focussed in Eurong and Happy Valley. Having been established longer than other Fraser Island settlements, these are two of the island's major centres of weed infestations. Many virulent weeds have become well established over a period of 70 years. They present a major risk to the natural integrity of Fraser Island if they are not contained. Being on the windward side of Fraser Island and, being major tourist hubs, Happy Valley & Eurong present great opportunities for the spread of these invasive weeds further around Fraser Island.

Although each of these major centres of infestation have the Great Sandy National Park on the northern, western and southern sides and the Pacific Ocean on the east, they don't come within the jurisdiction of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Each village covers about 300 hectares of which most is unallocated State land which is under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines. However, the epicentre of the infestations are the settlement areas which are under the direct jurisdiction of the two councils. Maryborough is responsible for Eurong, which despite its significant bed capacity, has only 8-10 permanent residents. Hervey Bay is responsible for Happy Valley, which similarly has fewer than 30 permanent residents. Thus dealing with the weed problem is beyond the capability of this handful of permanent residents.

Both villages represent a relatively small part of the two councils' administrative responsibility. Both are relatively remote and difficult to access from their administrative centres. Thus the weed problems have been largely neglected by the two Councils

With limited resources, FIDO has been working for more than five years to address the weed problems in both communities which have been neglected for all of the above reasons. FIDO is seeking to step up its efforts focussing on these two communities but, while being able to recruit volunteers to assist in the project, the organization requires financial assistance to enable it to provide appropriate logistical support and direction for the potential volunteers.



Bush Regenerators Attack Eurong

FIDO followed up Weedbusters Week 2005 by assisting with a two week assault on the weeds of Eurong. This is the longest and most extensive weeding bee which FIDO has yet coordinated. It is another step in FIDO's fight against Fraser Island ferals which has begun to gather increasing momentum with the assistance of a team of interstate volunteers.

Eurong Effort: Eight experienced bush regenerators from New South Wales offered their services to FIDO paid their own way to Fraser Island and even the cost of their accommodation. FIDO provided a vehicle to move the regenerators around Fraser Island as well as four volunteers from Brisbane. The volunteers put in about 400 hours of effort in weeding around Eurong, which has been a major centre of weed infestation on Fraser Island. Although Eurong is not under the jurisdiction of the QPWS, the island's Natural Resources Ranger, Dr Ivan Thrash, assisted the groups efforts.

The twelve volunteers put in 400 hours of effort in removing weeds from Eurong, mainly from around the resort area and in the Second Valley. They encountered Fish tail Ferns, Asparagus Fern, Madeira Vine, Corky Passion fruit, Painted Spurge, Easter Senna, Singapore Daisy, Siratro, Green Panic, Brazilian Nightshade, and brazillions of Mothers of Millions. Despite a mammoth effort they believe that they have only scratched the surface and are planning a return follow-up project next May to continue with this public service.

Councils' Support:

In July representatives of FIDO and both the Maryborough and Hervey Bay City Councils met to discuss the need for a more cooperative attack on the weeds. We are happy to report that the Councils are providing very supportive cooperation with our efforts.

1. The Councils will be taking FIDO's draft weeding booklets to publish and distribute them to residents and landholders in both Happy Valley and Eurong.
2. As a part of the education program, they are planning to install notice boards alerting residents and visitors to the target weeds and seeking their cooperation in controlling them. Attention will be drawn to the problems caused by dumping garden rubbish on vacant public land as weeds this rubbish may take root or seeds may germinate creating new weed patches.
3. They are also assisting us with a base for our store of tools and equipment and we will be seeking their cooperation in an ongoing campaign to clean up the township areas and prevent the weeds spreading into the surrounding National Park.



BUSH REGENERATORS 17 – 28 OCTOBER, 2005

The Team: Jan Parkin, Stephanie Lymburner, Ian Rutter, Goerge Haddock, Mary Tang, Su Dawson, Vicki Willes, Neil Tonkin, Colleen Enchelmaier, Julian Lymburner, Ross Macleay, Sandra Rutter

MORE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

There has been a lot of interest expressed by bush regenerators down south in helping remove weeds from Fraser Island. Anticipating some financial assistance to fund the logistics FIDO is planning more working bees in 2006 in both Happy Valley and Eurong.

FIDO has already acquired considerable equipment and has access to a 4WD and can accommodate 10 to 12 volunteers at a time. FIDO has lodged an application to the Burnett Mary Regional Group for a grant using funds from the Natural Heritage Trust to assist it carry out four 10-12 day weeding bees in 2006:

Happy Valley	March 2006
Happy Valley	June 2006
Happy Valley	August 2006
Eurong	October 2006

FIDO is seeking to employ a Brisbane-based coordinator to take charge of recruiting and overseeing the volunteers. We anticipate that we will get an aggregate of about 320 hours from each working bee. This should make a considerable inroad into the weeds of both communities.

Volunteers wanted: FIDO fully expects these weeding bees to proceed. Anybody in the community interested in volunteering should notify FIDO of their availability. As soon as a project coordinator is appointed they will contact all those on the volunteer list to select 10 for each project.

Details will be placed on FIDO's web site: www.fido.org.au as soon as we are in a position to go ahead.

Waste Creates Habitat for Weeds

Apart from the weeds in the urban area of Fraser Island a major problem arises from the waste which is generated in those urban area. Up until now the problems of weeds and waste management on Fraser Island had been considered as two separate topics rather than as being inter-related. Just how inter-related they are becomes apparent when you consider the following extract from the Bush Regenerators Report to FIDO at the conclusion of two solid weeks removing weeds at Eurong. It confirms observations made on previous FIDO working bees and inspections but has focused on the critical linkage between waste management and weeds.

***Eurong Second Valley:** Garden refuse was dumped in bushland opposite the properties, allows weeds to thrive from the nutrients and make weeding particularly dangerous and difficult. In addition to plant material, glass, plastic, metal, car batteries, car parts, oilcans, wire cable etc were encountered. This presented difficulties with species such as Madeira Vine and Mother of Millions that had a tendency to be brittle and drop tubers and plantlets respectively. Likewise Corky Passion-fruit Vine and Fox Tail Asparagus roots were difficult to access amongst the dumped dead branches. We are unaware of any Council cleanup mechanism or instructions as to the use of the local tip.*

***Eurong Resort:** Many of the weeds encountered (Easter Cassia, Lantana, Fox Tail Ferns) were often difficult to access because of the presence of bottles, cans, glass, building refuse, coconuts, coconut fronds, lawn clippings and tree prunings that have been dumped. This practice will probably increase the nutrient levels to higher levels than native plants (esp. Banksia) can tolerate. The resort truck was too large to access many grassed areas (too tall, catches on trees overhead) with the consequence of cuttings being left in the gardens or surrounding bushland.*

FIDO is now applying this information to address the other problem of Fraser Island waste management which has had the two City Councils and the QPWS in an unresolved dispute over recent years. (See **Island Waste Management — p7**)

Queensland World Heritage = World Class

In October, Environment Minister Desley Boyle told a conference attended by delegates from 15 countries including the United States, China, India and Malaysia, that Queensland was a world leader in managing and protecting world heritage areas. Ms Boyle was addressing the Shirakami-Sanchi International Conference on World Natural Heritage in Ajigasawa, Japan. She said that other countries are very interested in how Queensland operates. She claimed that Queensland has sophisticated management systems and huge visitor numbers. She said that a recent study estimated the Great Barrier Reef contributed about \$5.1 billion to the Australian economy and generated 63,000 jobs.

Comment: *This suggests that the initial study showing the value of Fraser Island at \$277 million might have been very conservative.*

QPWS attacks Great Sandy Pests

In August the Environment Minister announced that more than \$119,000 (part of the State Government's \$6million, three-year funding commitment to contain pests and improve protected-area fire-control) will be spent this year in the Great Sandy region.

To meet local responsibilities, QPWS is working to:

- * remove bitou bush in the Fraser Island and Cooloola sections of Great Sandy National Park
- * remove pine wildings in the western catchment of Cooloola National Park
- * build or upgrade fire lines in Cooloola and areas around Central Station, Eurong, Dundubara and Waddy Point on Fraser Island.

Ms Boyle acknowledged the cooperative working relationship between QPWS rangers in the Great Sandy region, councils, neighbouring landholders, local land care groups and Land Protection officers of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.



IS DINGO STRATEGY WORKING?

If the measure of success of the dingo Management Strategy is that the fewer the number of dingoes shot, the more successful the strategy is, then the last 12 months have shown increasing success.

Statistics released by the QPWS show that in 2002 fourteen (14) dingoes were killed by the QPWS for dangerous or aggressive behaviour. This reduced in 2003 to ten (10) and in 2004 it was eleven (11). However the October meeting of the CAC was advised that only three (3) dingoes had been killed in 2005 to that point. Some cynics may say that this is due to a reduction in total dingo numbers. Others may attribute it to a better rainfall regime in 2005. Research scientists in 2004 had pointed out that there was a correlation between frequency of dingo attacks and rainfall. They had predicted that with improved rainfall there would be a decline in the number of dingo incidents.

So far almost 80 dingoes have been ear tagged. On a recent 6 day inspection in October (contrary to other reports that dingoes are now rarely seen) several dingoes were sighted. However only one was noticed to be without an ear tag. This suggests that the aggregate number of dingoes on Fraser Island may be much lower than previous estimates of "fluctuating between 100 and 200".

FIDO continues to monitor the dingo situation on Fraser Island with real concern. The significance of the Fraser Island dingo population is now well recognized and we can't afford to be complacent if the population is in decline.



FRASER ISLAND CONFERENCE

Maintaining Fraser's Integrity

28th & 29th September, 2006

University of the Sunshine Coast

Pursuing the theme of "Maintaining Fraser Island's World Heritage Integrity", FIDO is also planning in conjunction with the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee and the University of the Sunshine Coast, Sippy Downs campus to stage a two day conference on 28th and 29th September next year. This will follow up the resounding success of their 2020 Vision for Fraser Island conference held last year.

Planning is still under way but the dates have been set and both FIDO and the Scientific Advisory Committee are extremely appreciative of the generous cooperation of the University of the Sunshine Coast which operates the Dilli Villi Field Studies Centre and a Research Station at Kingfisher Resort in its demonstrated commitment to Fraser Island in agreeing to provide the venue with its wonderful facilities.

FIDO and the SAC are interested in hearing from people wanting to contribute to the Conference. In 2004, FIDO conducted its 20-20 Vision Conference on Fraser Island. This resulted in a great momentum in considering issues and brought out new information and data about Fraser Island including the remarkable findings of what was happening to the great south-north river of sand off shore from Fraser Island. (What FIDO is doing to follow up its conference is now on the internet). Similarly also in 2004, the SAC held a colloquium on Fraser Island at Gatton College which heard of the findings of other scientific work undertaken on Fraser Island. The combination of the efforts of these two groups should produce a most stimulating conference.

Details of the conference arrangements will be placed on the FIDO web site: www.fido.org.au as they develop.

In the meantime, we invite those interested in Fraser Island and /or wanting to participate to set aside those dates now. This promises to be a major opportunity to become involved in learning more about Fraser Island, what is being done and what needs to be done to protect it.



Fraser Island dingoes — October 2005

FIDO EXECUTIVE CHANGES

At the FIDO AGM in August long-serving Executive Member Terry Hampson stepped down as President to be replaced by Andrew Sinclair. That was the most significant change in FIDO's management committee which has been rejuvenated in recent years and meets monthly in Brisbane where its busy and ambitious program for the next twelve months include:

- * Organizing four major working bees and hosting another to eliminate weeds in Eurong and Happy Valley;
- * Organizing in conjunction with the Scientific Advisory Committee and the University of the Sunshine Coast the second Fraser Island biennial conference next September;

- * Monitoring progress on our campaign to reduce the Fraser Island cane toad population;
- * Furthering the Greening the Great Sandy campaign to ensure that the Great Sandy Marine Park (Northern Section) is sustainable when it becomes reality;
- * Organizing a photographic contest to highlight the aesthetic values of the Fraser Island World Heritage area;
- * Continuing to pursue action to see a light rail people mover alternative for Fraser Island become a reality;
- * Pursuing a watchdog role which includes monitoring developments on and around Fraser Island for potential impacts on the overall Fraser Island management;
- * Cooperating with management agencies to achieve the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources.

FRASER ISLAND WASTE MANAGEMENT

As discussed in connection with the Bush Regenerators Report on Page 5, the problems of weeds on Fraser Island can't be separated from rubbish particularly garden waste. MOONBI 111 is focussed on addressing waste and weeds as a combined issue.

MOONBI notes that the QPWS recently advised in a laconic report, *Fraser Island Waste Management Strategy currently stalled due to Councils withdrawing from the collaborative process. Efforts are underway to get the process back on track.*

Brief History of Waste Management Strategy. In July 2002 the QPWS sent a bill to each Council based on a conservative estimate of the share of the expense which each should contribute. Hervey Bay's share for period 1997-2001 was \$330,451. While neither Council paid up they agreed to fund a waste management strategy for the island. In August 2004, HLA Envirosiences, the successful tenderer delivered its Waste Management Report. However in 2005 the Councils again balked at meeting what the QPWS consider is a fair share of the cost of waste removal. While most of the crisis over waste management is who should pick up the tab for the current very expensive operations, there has been less attention on how to better and more efficiently manage waste in an environmental satisfactory way.

The Problem:

The main problem with waste management on Fraser Island arises from dealing with the messy, smelly putrescibles, food scraps generated by island visitors who want to be rid of these wastes as soon as possible. Many Fraser Island visitors as well as the fewer than 100 permanent residents and the workers who are not permanent residents but who are based on the island for several days at a time are reluctant to store the putrescibles they generate to take back to the mainland.

The putrescibles are mainly composed of biodegradable wastes such as food scraps. Thus asking people to take their waste back to the mainland with them is not a very attractive option. Keen urban waste minimizers in the cities solve this problem by composting all putrescible rubbish and other waste.

On Lord Howe Island where land is very scarce but which has only 300 residents and about 13,000 visitors a year waste is treated in a similar way. There a giant composting machine accelerates the process.

FIDO's suggested solution:

FIDO believes that if the treatment of putrescible waste on Fraser Island could be addressed as a first priority then it should be much easier to resolve what to do with the remaining non smelly rubbish and waste which has been taken to the island and is now surplus to requirements.

FIDO also believes that if the issue of garden waste (see p.5) is brought into the equation, then some form of composting becomes an apparent solution which could deal with all of the biodegradable wastes generated on Fraser Island. That would then leave only non-biodegradable waste to be addressed. In the future this is less of a problem because whoever takes non-putrescible waste to Fraser Island can (and should) be persuaded to take it back to the mainland with them.

Composting Options: While FIDO is impressed by the Lord Howe Island mechanical composter, we don't see that as being feasible on Fraser Island because of the much greater geographic dispersal of the problem as it is a distance of 75 kilometres between Orchid Beach and Dilli Villi. We need an option which would allow for decentralized composting to occur at least Happy Valley and Eurong and ideally also at Orchid Beach and each of the major campgrounds. We want a composting option which would enable food waste to be mixed with garden waste. It also has to be an option which will not impact on island wildlife by building up populations of opportunistic feeders such as crows, seagulls, goannas, dingoes and rats.

It is a tall order but it does seem that it could be much cheaper to treat the more difficult waste generated on Fraser Island *in situ* rather than removing 100% of the rubbish from the island at an horrific expense.

FIDO proposes to explore the options for composting and its feasibility and potential impacts further. It may be the solution to not one, but two problems.



A Greater Great Sandy Marine Park

The proposed Great Sandy Marine Park will have only a 3.8% green (no take) zone or Marine National Park when scientists are arguing that it needs about ten times that amount of green zoning to achieve the maximum productivity. It has been called the Clayton's Marine Park, one you declare when you are not going to change a thing.

Analysis of the Queensland Government's own data from a core area of the Great Sandy Strait and Hervey Bay shows that there has been a significant trend and decline in the commercial fishery between 1988 and 2002. At the same time a conference of international marine biologists in Melbourne was being convincingly told of the data showing that increasing the proportion of "no-take" zones can reverse this downward trend in productivity. However the majority the people in the Great Sandy Region are not fishers and there are compelling arguments for affording larger green zones for both aesthetic and biodiversity reasons.

Greening the Great Sandy

The National Parks Association of Queensland, Australian Marine Conservation Society and the Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Council have joined with FIDO in a joint coordinated campaign — Greening the Great Sandy — to ensure that the proposed Great Sandy Marine Park which is due to be gazetted soon has an adequate area of Marine National Parks. There are numerous other conservation groups actively supporting the Greening the Great Sandy including the Noosa Parks Association, the Pacific Whale Foundation and other South East Queensland Conservation Councils

The Draft Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan released early in 2005 proposed less than 4% of the area as "no take" or "green zones". Collectively we are seeking a tenfold increase in the green protected areas but we appear to have run into some very entrenched opposition within the Beattie Government which appears determined not to make any concessions to conservation.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park began with less than 5% of its area zoned as Marine National Parks. Because fish can move easily from within these green zones into areas where they could be taken and because of the impacts of fishers (particularly trawlers) on the habitat, this small proportion was found to be inadequate to sustain the productivity of the fishery. Within a very short time it had to be increased to 34%. Many scientists still believe that this will need to be increased further to between 40% and 50% if maximum productivity is to be achieved for the whole marine park.

The Greening the Great Sandy campaign to break down the Beattie Government's intransigent stance on this Marine Park has so far involved:

- * Detailed analysis of data from the DPIF which shows that the Great Sandy fishery is in decline;
- * A cruise on the sailing boat "Blue Dolphin" under the command of Skipper Peter Lynch to highlight that there are more than just fishery issues and values involved with the Great Sandy Marine Park;
- * A workshop at Hervey Bay attended by over 50 conservationists anxious to improve the protection of the habitat; and
- * Development of a 10 point plan of action for the Greening Great Sandy Coalition and the workshop proceedings into a single document downloadable from www.npaq.org.au/Great_Sandy/GGSreport.pdf

Great Sandy Strait

Great Sandy Strait is irrefutably the richest and most biodiverse part of the whole of the proposed Great Sandy Marine Park. It contains very extensive mangrove forests, sea-grass beds and mudflats thereby making it a special marine breeding habitat and nursery area for a wide range of fish, birds and marine mammals. It is a habitat for a very high population of dugong and turtles and has one of Australia's greatest densities of trans-equatorial wading birds. Therefore, how it is zoned epitomizes the overall treatment of the whole of the Great Sandy Marine Park.

Although its undoubted biological credentials have been recognized by it being declared a Ramsar site (Wetland of International Significance) the Draft Marine Park zoning plan allowed virtually all of the Great Sandy Strait to remain open for commercial fishing including trawling and netting. In fact of the whole of the Great Sandy Marine Park, less than 4.0% will be excluded from fishing. That grossly inadequate allocation of green zones (Marine National Parks) is reflected even within the most ecologically sensitive Great Sandy Strait.

The value of Great Sandy Strait is not just its fish production. Great Sandy Strait is an important recreation area. The annual event for trailer sailors from Tin Can Bay to Urangan attracts about 150 craft currently. It is fringed on the mainland side by a number of small communities including Mary River Heads, Maroom, Boonooroo, Poona and Tinnanbar where much of the recreation is based on the aesthetics of its naturalness.

If Great Sandy Strait doesn't qualify for marine National Park status when it is about to get World Heritage status, the Beattie Government really has things screwed up. See the Great Sandy Strait Backgrounder with this issue.



Fraser Island and Great Sandy Strait

A Declining Fishery

Challenged to show that the current Great Sandy Region fishery was in decline, National Parks Association of Queensland's Executive Officer, Dr Martin Taylor analyzed the catch/effort data for one central Great Sandy quadrant for which data was available. This is an extract from his briefing paper. The results cannot be ignored by any government determined to look to the future.

Commercial catch and effort data for the years 1988-2003 were obtained for the V33 grid section which encompasses a large portion of Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Strait, using data collected by DPIF under a new logbook system since 1988 (Fig 1).



Fig 1: Fishery grid section V33 used for the analysis. Blue areas are dugong protection areas. Map downloaded from <http://chrisweb.dpi.qld.gov.au/CHRIS/> on 31/10/05.

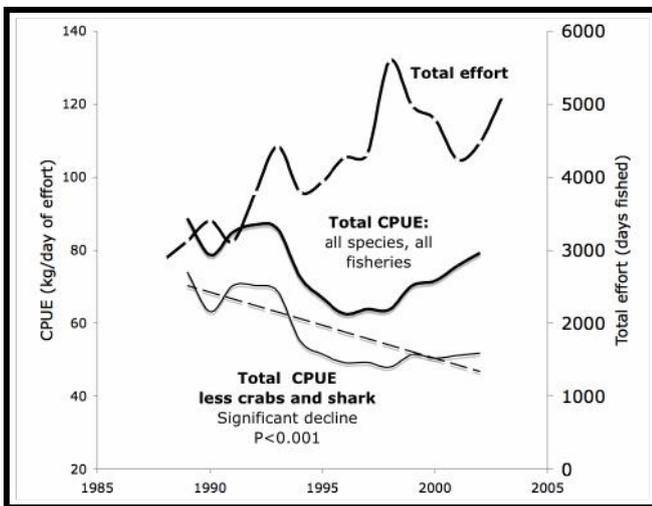


Fig 2: Total catch per day of fishing effort (CPUE) in the Great Sandy Straits (DPI Fisheries Grid section V33, smoothed data); total CPUE less catch of sharks, blue swimmer and mud crabs (smoothed data) and total effort from 1988 to 2003. Dashed line is linear regression fitted to Total less crabs and shark. Source: DPIF's CHRIS database, from <http://chrisweb.dpi.qld.gov.au/CHRIS/> on 31/10/05.

Data were not available in every year for many species nor for other grid sections like V34, due to DPIF's "confidentiality" policy of withholding catch data in fisheries with less than 5 boats operating.

Data show high interannual variability and were smoothed using a three-year moving-average window. Simple linear regression on year was used to detect significant trends.

Although an upward trend appears in total catch/effort in the past decade, the overall trend since 1988 was downward with most recent catch/effort levels still lower than those in the early 1990s (Fig 2).

These total figures lump many species together and must be treated with caution. Shark, blue-swimmer and mud crabs were the dominant components of total catch that also had complete catch and effort records published, and that also showed obvious recent increases in catch/effort (data not shown). When these species were removed from the total catch estimates, the decline in catch/effort was highly significant over the whole period (Fig 2).

Hence total CPUE of all fished species except sharks, blue swimmer and mud crabs has significantly declined. During the same period total commercial effort in V33 has clearly increased substantially (Fig 2).

The two main trawl fisheries in the region also showed a declining CPUE pattern. The otter trawl catch showed significant decline over the period, while the mean beam trawl catch showed a low recent level of CPUE after a brief high in the early 1990s (Fig. 3).

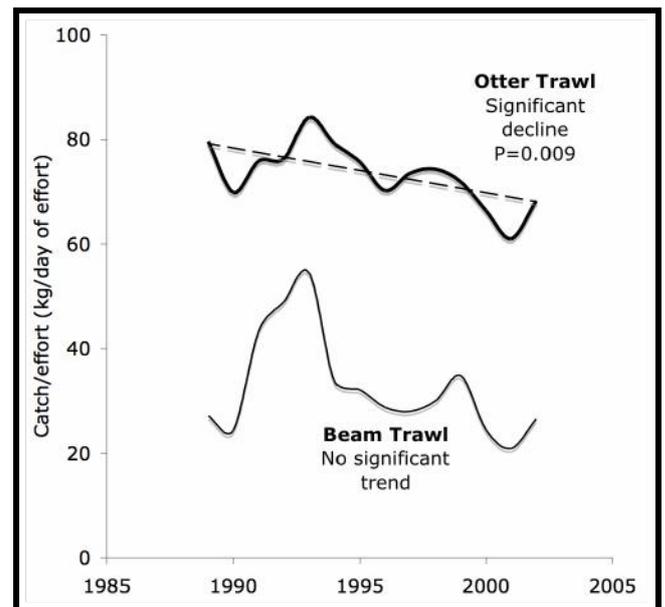


FIG 3: CPUE for the otter and beam trawl fisheries in the Great Sandy Straits V33 grid. Dashed line is fitted regression for otter trawl CPUE. Details as for Fig 2.



The sandspit at Lake McKenzie

Feds to Buy out Fishing Licences

In mid November the Commonwealth Government announced the largest structural adjustment package ever offered to the Australian fishing industry. It will help secure Commonwealth fish stocks and a profitable future for the fishing industry.

Although it was in response to the state of Australia's fish stocks, and the sustainability and profitability of the industry, the Howard Government's \$220 million Securing our Fishing Future package unfortunately failed to include anything for the Great Sandy Region.

The Government said that it had listened to industry, scientists and 'sensible' environmentalists, and had looked closely at the future of the fisheries before agreeing to provide a major package of one-off structural adjustment and improved management measures for those fisheries managed by the Australian Government.

Fisheries and Conservation Minister Senator Ian Macdonald said, *"It is a fact, well accepted by industry,*

that there are too many boats chasing too few fish in many of our fisheries."

The centre-piece of the package is \$150 million for one-off structural adjustment assistance focused on reducing the high level of fishing capacity in those (Commonwealth) fisheries that are subject to over-fishing - or at significant risk of over-fishing. The Ministerial announcement said that the package would also address the displaced fishing effort arising from the creation of marine protected areas in the south east marine region.

While the ministers shouted about the amount, they were much quieter about the fact that none of the money would be coming to South East Queensland but was mainly for New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

They said that it would also address the displaced fishing effort arising from the creation of Marine Protected Areas in Commonwealth waters of the south-east marine region.

NEWS FROM THE Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

The following items have been extracted and edited from various QPWS reports and publications including the newsletter "Sandpaper":

HOOK POINT ROAD: Work continues on a major upgrade of the first 18km of the Hook Point Rd on Fraser Island, with completion expected by the end of October. The proposal is to then close the adjacent 18km section of eastern beach as recommended in the Great Sandy Region Management Plan.

DINGO NEWS: In 1999 FIDO began advocating that all Fraser Island dingoes be recorded. The QPWS started in late 2002 regular monitoring including tagging, recording and photographing individual animals. A total of 97 dingoes have been captured, tagged and released back into the wild. Tagging is the best method to identify and monitor dingo movements. This helps to build up a better picture of the Fraser Island dingo, especially the size and status of the population and its representative range and habits. Untagged dingoes are still being reported.

FIDO: *The good news is that along with better seasons the numbers of dingo incidents has declined and so in 2005 only three (3) dingoes have been killed for showing aggression. This is just as well because the size of the dingo population appears to be significantly smaller than the QPWS guesstimates made back in 1999.*

CAMPING: A booking system for Fraser's beach camping zones has been introduced in accordance with the Fraser Island Camping Management Plan to try to minimize impacts. The QPWS has started with the section between Eurong and One Tree Rocks and hopes to have all eastern beach camping zones signposted and listed in the booking system by early 2006.

NEW BOOKINGS SYSTEM: Bookings work on a visitor-night capacity for each zone. There are no formal sites. It's first-in-best-placed, but only if you have a booking. **Booking can be done either online at www.qld.gov.au/camping or by phoning 13 13 04 (24 hours, 7 days).**

FIDO: *Pre-booking for campsites is another FIDO policy to be adopted. Camping along the foredunes on Fraser's eastern beach is a great experience, but overcrowding in some areas is causing big problems.*

The conversion to pre-booking sites had quite a few initial hiccups but hopefully the system will settle down and there will be a limit on free range camping to ensure that it is sustainable in the long term.

Coincidental with the pre-booking of camp sites has been the closure of some QPWS offices and reduced hours for others which previously dealt with public camping inquiries. Also anyone now entering Fraser Island without a permit (which has to be obtained through the new booking system) will invoke a very heavy fine. FIDO welcomes these moves even though it has caused us some distress to discover that we had to pay for the volunteers to go to Fraser Island to eradicate weeds when the rules say that people working on Fraser Island are not required to pay access fees.

REPRIEVE FOR BABY WHALE: In late August, a very young humpback whale calf, estimated at less than one month old, was stranded on the beach in southern Fraser Island after a shark attack. Rangers, police and volunteers worked for almost five hours guiding the 800kg, 5m-long whale to deeper waters. By days end the calf was swimming towards a small pod of adults. Hopefully its mother was among them.



American university students from the School for International Training personally spell out "Australia" in Knifeblade sandblow

LAKE MCKENZIE: There has been some good news and some bad news about the management of Lake McKenzie. FIDO had long been concerned at the necessity for rangers to drive down to the old the petrol-engined fire pump, which pumped water directly from the lake to taps and toilets. This had accelerated sand wash down the vehicle tracks into the swale behind the lunette. The old pump has been replaced with one working on solar energy, so reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fuel and labour costs. Water is now drawn from an underground bore, away from the precious rain-fed, perched lake. The effects of efficient water- saving devices and an upgraded reticulation system have combined to markedly reduce water consumption.

FIDO: *One of the other water saving devices at Lake McKenzie which is not welcome was the destruction of the second toilet in the old camp ground. This left only four cubicles to cater for the huge visitation there. This is causing some people to avoid the flushing by going into the bush.*



The main tourist focus area of Lake McKenzie

CAUTION: FALLING KAURI CONES: Loggers first came to Fraser Island in 1863 to log kauri pines and white beech. Timber was punted to the mainland where it was highly sought after for its suitability for boat building. With boats being the main form of transport in the new colony, supplies of viable sized softwoods on the island were depleted within 20 years. Foresters began planting kauri pines, some of which still stand today. The row of kauri pines at Central Station was planted in the 1920s along the original Wanggoolba Creek–Eurong road. Kauris have a distinctive gun-barrel trunk with smooth, orange-brown bark that always seems to be flaking. Come November and December however, it pays to stay clear of these beauties, as they drop their fruiting cones from a great height. Cones can weigh up to 3kg. For visitor safety, rangers may cordon off areas around some kauris and temporarily close sections of walking tracks.

GREAT CLASSROOM: One of the first alternative land uses FIDO identified as an alternative to industrial exploitation back in 1971 was to see Fraser Island used more for educational purposes. This has now become a reality. Every year national and international students visit the island as part of their school curriculum, to learn more about Fraser Island’s many different ecosystems. Many have discovered the University of Sunshine Coast’s Environmental Education Centre at Dilli Village. Others take advantage of the large group sites available at Central Station and Dundubara campgrounds.

FIRES: The QPWS continues to carry out conservation burns to help the biodiversity – keeping a good level of richness and variety of life. This year Waddy Headlands had 23 percent of its 13ha area burnt using a low intensity mosaic burn. For monitoring purposes, rangers set up photo-monitoring points prior to the burn. The area is monitored for vegetation recovery and habitat changes. Kangaroo grass was already sprouting after two weeks. Rangers also completed other successful hazard reduction burns in various sites across the island.

NEW WILDLIFE RECORDS: Natural Resource Rangers continue to add to the natural history story of Fraser Island. A Queensland Museum staff visit in mid-year resulted in some interesting finds including the skeleton of a Fraser’s dolphin, the third record of this species for Queensland, a Buller’s albatross, the second recorded specimen for Fraser Island, and a horned sea-snake, which is a new addition to the Fraser Island species list.

FISHERS BECOMING EDUCATED: More and more fishers are discouraging dingoes from coming close to them when fishing, by storing bait and fish in shoulder bags or in vehicles and not in beach buckets. Fisher folk are also getting the idea of burying fish when dingoes are not around. QPWS recommends burying fish remains just below high tide mark — too close to the water’s edge and the hole fills with water, refloating the remains and attracting dingoes quickly. Sometimes dingoes do find and dig up fish remains, but without the food-from-people association, it’s another step towards letting them live wild.

BUILDING BRIDGES: QPWS staff recently repaired the historic Postan’s Bridge on Poyungan Road. The bridge dates back almost 60 years to when roads on the island were used as logging tracks. Bridges in that era were built from Fraser Island satinay (*Syncarpia hillii*). They were constructed using hand-cut and shaped girders, secured by 2.5-foot-long (75cm) steel spikes (handcrafted by the local blacksmith) driven through the girder to the underlying corbels. Timber for repairs was sourced from forest plantations on the mainland. For added safety, the bridges are now decked with hardwood and have guideposts and toe rails.

GREAT WALK: The Great Walk is attracting increasing numbers of walkers. Fraser Island’s asset management team maintains the walk with weekly clean-ups at the eight walkers camps and quarterly, pre-holiday track maintenance work along the great walk and its 180km many access tracks. Visitor-impact on tracks and campsites is regularly monitored. There has been virtually no compliance issues such as illegal campfires, vandalism or littering. All infrastructure along the walk (toilets, bridges, boardwalks, lookouts, tables, fences) are in good order and, best of all, QPWS has had no reports of lost or injured walkers, or dingo incidents along the track.

FIDO: *We have met people from Europe and interstate who have flown to Queensland specifically to walk in this World Heritage area and the number is visibly increasing.*



INFORMATION SESSIONS: QPWS staff held two separate information sessions for commercial tour operators, and managers and volunteers working in tourist information centres. The sessions were well-attended and helped to update people on the latest information, projects, and policies in place in Great Sandy National Park. Keep an eye out for the next session planned for early 2006.

FIDO: *While this is a very useful step, not all tour operators were invited to participate including two small tour operators who sit on the Community Advisory Committee. There are still some amazingly uninformed comments by some tour guides which FIDO members have overheard recently.*

OTHER RECENT WORK: QPWS continues upgrading campgrounds and key visitor sites across the island. The works are designed to improve environmental sustainability and increase visitor safety and enjoyment:

- Improvements to Coolooloi Creek campground include three formal campsites, picnic tables and dingo-safe food lockers, better vehicle access to the boat ramp and continuing weed control and revegetation projects.
- Upgrade of Lake Birrabeen tour operator's facilities including replacement of stairs and trackside erosion control.
- Construction of retaining walls at Lake McKenzie, topped with comfortable seating for visitors, to reduce erosion around the roots of the remaining shade trees and protect smaller plants from trampling.

BRAILLE ON THE BOARDWALK: The Bayer sculptures, on the Wanggoolba Creek boardwalk are developing some interesting myths, but the real story goes like this. The project was funded in 2004 under the Queensland Government's Art Built-in program, whereby 2% of the Wanggoolba Creek boardwalk construction funds were set aside for a piece of art to enrich visitor experience. Local artist Monika Bayer sculpted the totems from old ironbark posts purchased from a wood-recycling firm on the mainland. The totems were designed to offer a sensory interpretation of the creek and its surrounds. Ms Bayer carved the images into the wood and sandpapered it to a fine smooth finish. The carvings swirl around three sides of the totems and continue on into the brass caps, which hold Braille text. Each totem has a theme, which when read with the fingers 'speaks' to people with poor or no eyesight.



Another yacht which followed the "Blue Dolphin" during the FIDO organized inspection of Great Sandy Strait on 6th November.

Its Time to Cull Coconuts

While most Australians accept the presence of coconut palms, they have to be considered as alien exotic plants and even as weeds.

While most Australians accept the presence of coconut palms they have to be considered as alien exotic plants. No coconut palms were observed in Australia by Captain Cook in 1770 and the presence of them along the Endeavour River would have been keenly noted for the dietary change they offered. Coconut palms probably did not "naturally" occur anywhere in the Pacific. Thus we have to consider coconut palms as an alien introduction.

The first coconut palms on Fraser Island were the result of nuts washed ashore and taken by settlers and planted above the high water mark. The "Horse Paddock" run by Henry Aldridge at the beginning of the 20th century south of Eurong was marked by two conspicuous coconut palms but these were lost and no other coconut palms became established until after the sale of subdivisions at Eurong and Happy Valley in the 1960s.

Not Natural: Coconut palms don't belong naturally on Fraser Island. Further they occur mainly around the township where the fronds and nuts they drop constitute the largest volume of garden waste generated in Fraser Island's urban areas. This has other environmental consequences as discussed elsewhere in this MOONBI.

The littoral zone occupies a narrow band of coast, 5 to 30 metres wide. It is adapted to extreme weather and growing conditions. Intact littoral forests are absolutely critical to maintaining the integrity of our coastal geomorphology. The natural vegetation can be easily out-competed by aggressive weed species such as coconut palms and groundsel. Thus it is important to ensure that these are not allowed to proliferate on Fraser Island. Groundsel is already classified as a noxious weed as are many of the other invaders of the littoral zone. It is time that coconut palms were treated in the same way.

Prohibition: FIDO believes that there should be a prohibition on new coconut palms on Fraser Island before they become a major weed invader such as has occurred along more tropical parts of the Queensland coast. As more and more nuts drop from the now established coconuts this probability looms ever larger. The time to act is now to prevent an even greater volume of garden waste being generated. As existing Fraser Island coconuts are removed they should not be replaced by coconuts.

Iconic? Despite the coconut palms' "iconic" status as indicators of "paradise" in promoting so many Queensland coastal resorts, a survey of 560 visitors carried out by the Cape Tribulation Tropical Research Station and International Student Volunteers at Cape Tribulation in 2004 indicated that only 1% of those surveyed were interested in seeing coconut palms. Coconut palms are "copy-cat" icons. Fraser Island should stand unique and not a facsimile Hawaii, Fiji or Seychelles. If the obsession with palm trees is so great, why not replace coconut palms with Pandanus and Cabbage palms which occur naturally on Fraser Island.

Natural image needed: The Queensland Government and the local authorities should consider the need to evolve a distinctly natural and unique image for Queensland and remove coconut palms as icons from all Queensland tourist promotions. They should also act to outlaw them in landscaping designs and prohibit the growing of coconut palms in natural World Heritage areas.

South East Queensland Planning Lacks Environmental Vision

The population of South East Queensland is expanding at an alarming rate. Over 200 people are moving in (mainly from interstate) every day. That is adding over 60,000 people annually (about equivalent to the Cities of Maryborough and Hervey Bay combined). This mass migration will amount to an extra one million people by the year 2020. It has politicians and planners in a dilemma.

Premier Beattie has embarked upon an ambitious plan to help South East Queensland deal with the problem by trying to anticipate the needs for transport, schools, water and basic services. However the Beattie Government has overlooked the most critical factor in the equation — the environment. The Beattie Government seems to be determined to destroy the environment which along with the Queensland lifestyle is what is drawing people to South East Queensland.

MOONBI 111 looks at some of the issues of immediate concern to FIDO. South East Queensland's natural environment (of which Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region is a crucial part) are being neglected or deliberately sacrificed while planning proceeds at a fast pace for other infrastructure.

In its clumsy attempts to deal with the population influx the Beattie Government is exploring many options where environmental protection is overlooked. These include

1. Marine Park or Aquaculture Farms:
2. Water:
3. Recreation:

1. Marine Park or Aquaculture Farms:

While the matter of the Great Sandy Marine Park is stalled there is a simultaneous move to industrialize these precious waterways surrounding Fraser Island. The Queensland Government has engaged a consultant from the firm Sinclair Knight Mertz to assess the planning options for marine aquaculture in the Great Sandy Region, prior to making a decision on whether to advance the project. The consultant who completely overlooked FIDO in her consultations with community groups said that the Government wanted information on the costs and the benefits, socially and economically on the Great Sandy Region.

The stated purpose of the Study: *The Great Sandy region has been identified as one of the few remaining areas on Queensland's east coast that may be highly suitable for marine aquaculture, as it has the combination of relatively sheltered but deep waters, close proximity to service ports and domestic and international transport centres, and a regional skills base in the marine industry and seafood processing. The waters of Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Straits are also an important natural resource for commercial tourism and are subject to high levels of commercial and recreational fishing and recreational boating. The planning area also contains a number of areas of State, National and International environmental significance that are recognised by existing and proposed statutory and non-statutory management instruments including Fish Habitat Areas, Marine Parks, Ramsar Wetlands, Register of the National Estate and World Heritage Areas.*

Providing less than 4% of the Great Sandy National Park as Green Zone leaves an enormous scope for further exploitation of the marine resources and for aquaculture ventures and on the recent precedents there will be no environmental impact assessment of any of these before they are given the political nod.

2. Water Resources

Peter Beattie told a recent community Cabinet meeting that his Cabinet spends more time considering issues of water than any other single issue to come before the Cabinet. However the environment doesn't seem to figure very prominently in those deliberations.

The future exploitation of water resources in the Mary Basin is on the agenda for the Queensland Government.

The Draft Mary Basin Water Resource Plan The Mary River is the major river in the plan area, which also includes the streams of the Sunshine Coast and Burrum River.

In releasing the draft plan for public comment, Natural Resources and Mines Minister Henry Palaszczuk said, "***A management framework is proposed for sub-artesian water taken from the ecologically sensitive Cooloola Sandmass aquifer.***"

This is incredible and it is totally in conflict with the Great Sandy Region Management Plan. Of course the plan has no statutory basis because so far, Premier Beattie has failed to honour his 2001 Election Pledge. (See pp 2-3).

"The Mary Basin and the entire region are undergoing a period of unprecedented growth and change, with pressure on the sharing of water from the basin's catchments. Urban water use accounts for about half the water used in the plan area, with the remainder taken up by agriculture and industry," Mr Palaszczuk said.

This seems to be a further hint that there will be less and less water flowing out of the Mary River to nourish the marine life of the Great Sandy Marine Park (if that ever becomes a reality).

3. Recreation

The demands of an extra million people in South East Queensland for recreation is going to put greater pressure on the Great Sandy Region with consequential serious environmental impacts. This is evident in the impact of greater urbanization along the western shores of Great Sandy Strait. It is evident with the demands for a huge new marina at Tin Can Bay. It will impact in the greater number of recreational fishers using the Great Sandy Region and the greater volume of boating which will inevitably increase the potential for boat strikes on marine life. It is evident in the increasing visitor impact on Fraser Island and Cooloola.

Planning for South East Queensland's future must protect the region's increasingly threatened and precious natural environment.



MOONBI 111

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, PO Box 70, BALD HILLS QLD 4036

FIDO, "The Watchdog of Fraser Island", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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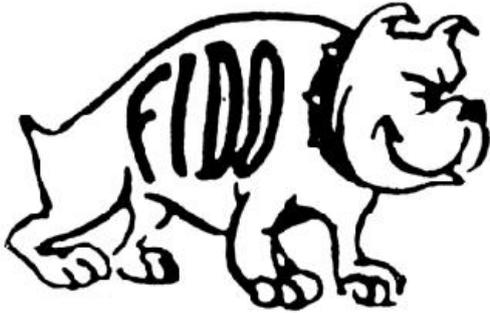
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MOONBIs (since MOONBI 89 1996) and all FIDO Backgrounders can be found at www.fido.org.au Email: john@fido.org.au

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PRESIDENTS REPORT 2004 - 05

I would like to thank all members of the FIDO executive for their continuing support during the last year since I was elected as the president of FIDO.

I have, because of minor health problems, holidays and other commitments, not been able to devote as much time as I would have liked and as a consequence will not be standing for any positions at this years A.G.M. I have continued however, to have had great support from committee members.

The committee has decided to present life membership to two of our members, John Davey & Ronda Cook. Both members thoroughly deserve this award and I would like to congratulate them.

Conference: A very successful first FIDO conference entitled FRASER ISLAND A 20-20 VISION was held at Noosa during August 2004. The conference provided much new information for the wide variety of delegates attending. Though not the original intention, FIDO light rail proposal caused a great deal of interest and support from most of the attending delegates and resulted in considerable media interest.

The keynote address was given by Dr. Geoff Mosley. He urged that the full Great Sandy Region be nominated for World Heritage Listing.

The conference was also addressed by Prof. Ron Boyd whose paper, entitled 'River of Sand', revealed the fascinating contours of the seabed around Sandy Cape and Breaksea Spit. Such formations have not been identified on this scale before and would justify being included in a much larger off-shore area in the World Heritage Area. As a result, Ron Boyd's paper was again presented to a very well attended joint meeting with the Royal Geographical Society in Brisbane in April this year.

The success of the Fraser Island Colloquy held by the Scientific Advisory Committee at Gatton and the FIDO's 20-20 Vision conference has resulted in plans for a joint conference between the two groups to be held on the Sunshine Coast in September or October of 2006.

Planning has already begun for this event. Thanks go to Saren Starbridge for her organization of the conference along with all members of our enthusiastic committee.

On the week-end of the 8-10 April the FIDO Executive made an inspection of the island along with members of the Scientific Advisory Committee. Members expressed satisfaction with some aspects of management of the island but considerable concern with others. Concern was expressed about Eli Creek, weeds, tree poisoning and camping, to mention only a few. It was noticed that as a result of disastrous fire management practices, many fire sensitive cypress pines had been destroyed.

A great deal of concern in recent months has centered around the State Governments draft Great Sandy Region Marine Park Plan, this plan is not ecologically sustainable as it currently protects less than 4% of the marine park. FIDO officers have been working with National Parks Association and the Australian Marine Conservation Society to reverse this policy. A resolution proposed by FIDO members at the A.L.P. State Conference and supported by the party's policy committee, called on the party to recognize A.L.P. policy and manage the area in an appropriate manner and allow future World Heritage Listing. The resolution was carried unanimously.

A special thanks to Dr. Ian Matthews and John Sinclair Snr. for their tireless efforts to ensure good management of the marine park.

Our finances remain comfortable with a management grant of \$5,500 from the State Government. Thank-you to Julie Bush for her finance management skills.

Many issues still remain a problem and will remain so for our organization for many years. The challenges just keep coming.

Weeds are still an issue and it would seem that FIDO is the only organization with weeds at the top of its agenda. FIDO is in the process of setting up two sheds with signboards and equipment to facilitate the work of volunteers who turn up on site. Thanks to Andrew Sinclair for his work on this project. Colleen Enchelmeier is working hard on an identification booklet on weeds.

Other issues of major concern include Dingo management, roads, camping, aspirations of traditional owners along with the proper implementation of the management plan for the island.

Through the year changes have been made to Moonbie to reduce the cost and enable us to make issues more current for members. A big thanks to John and Andrew Sinclair for their hard work in keeping not only members but the community well informed on all issues relating to Fraser Island.

Michelle Sinclair is our behind the scenes person who keeps the organization going in true Billie Watts style. Many thanks Michelle.

I look forward to another year of success with FIDO. The old (guard) is being replaced by a new group of younger people and the blend will bear fruit in the future.

Thank-you again to all those who have made us one of the most successful environment groups in the business.

Finally I would like to welcome John Sinclair back to Queensland and wish him all the best for the future in his many and varied interests.

Terry Hampson

