



MOONBI 116

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

MOONBI is the newsletter of Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited

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

FIDO's Registered Office: c/- Stephen Comino & Arthur Comino, G2 425 Milton Road, Milton, 4065

ABN 59 009 969 135

FIDO's Postal Address: PO Box 909 TOOWONG QLD 4066

Editor: John Sinclair, #2/30 Cameron Street, Nundah Q 4012

MOONBIs since 1996 and all FIDO Backgrounders can be found at www.fido.org.au

Email: john@fido.org.au

ISSN 0311 - 032X

17th September, 2007

Since MOONBI 115

There have been some most significant developments involving FIDO and Fraser Island since MOONBI 115 was mailed out on 9th May.

State Issues: 1. Council Amalgamations: With the whole of Fraser Island now after a lapse of 33 years (due to Russell Hinze's intervention as Local Government Minister in 1974) being again under the single local authority, Premier Beattie finally remembered the election promise he made in 2000 to introduce legislation to protect Fraser Island and other World Heritage sites. See story p2.

2. Traveston: Premier Beattie's belated initiative to protect Queensland's outstanding natural icons is not matched by other Queensland Government actions such as building the proposed Traveston Dam on the Mary River which will have a most detrimental environmental impact downstream in Great Sandy Strait and on the World Heritage and Ramsar sites. See story p4.

A Federal Issues: As Australians prepare for an imminent Federal Election FIDO wants the next Commonwealth Government to give Fraser Island a fair go financially. This MONBI illustrates very graphically just how poorly Fraser Island has fared under federal funding arrangements for World Heritage over the past decade. We encourage FIDO members and supporters to copy the petition with this MOONBI gather signatures and get them back to us as soon as possible to enable us to present them early next year.

New Recognition: On the Commonwealth front Fraser Island has been included in the National Heritage List although it was the first item to go on to the Register of the National Estate back in 1976. Also in the new revised World Heritage criteria, Fraser Island now meets three of the 10 World Heritage criteria (although just one would be enough to justify is listing) Although no additional values have yet been recognized this is expected to happen when Fraser Island and Cooloola are renominated for World Heritage listing soon. See stories p4,

Expanding Lake McKenzie recreation area: In a move from left field the QPWS has suddenly begun advocating the expansion of the recreation area to Lake McKenzie's Second Beach because it only has enough money to build one new toilet block and that model best fits the plan. FIDO is strenuously opposed to this and a big stoush seems imminent. See story p5.

Growing Support for Fraser Island's Light Rail: Amongst the many interesting items in News in Brief is a ringing endorsement from former Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of Tourism Australia, Tim Fisher for FIDO's light rail proposal. It needs support from Queensland politicians.



Finishing FIDO's Eurong Weed Info Shelter August 07

Weeds: Since May FIDO has organized several working bees to help deal with two epicenters of weed infestation on Fraser Island, the townships of Eurong and Happy Valley and erected weed information shelters in both villages.

FIDO is an entirely voluntary organization. It has no professional staff. All work on its behalf is done in an honorary capacity. However, FIDO needs financial support to meet necessary expenses to deal with the major issues and projects, and to pursue research and campaigns to improve Fraser Island management.

Backgrounders: This MOONBI provides background on federal funding for Fraser Island which shows how poorly it has been treated. This is accompanied by a petition. *Please feel free to copy the petition, and gather signatures but get the signatures to FIDO by 31st January.* Another backgrounder deals with the Fraser Island fens. While FIDO had known of the existence of the boggy peaty swamps or "open country" which were incredibly difficult to traverse, it took 25 years before we had a name for these features or even a basic understanding of their ecological significance. **Fens** are our other backgrounder.

FIDO has a complete set of backgrounders on our web site including the 6 A4 page history, "Eliza Fraser's Troubled TIMES" which was recently revised coincidental with the Queensland Conservatorium's concert on this theme.

In This Issue

Fraser Island benefits from local government reforms..	2
Waging the war against weeds.....	3
Damning report on Traveston; More recognition	4
Bigger footprint at Lake McKenzie; Eliza Fraser	5
Fraser Dingoes genetic purity; Visitation Stats.....	6
News in brief	7-9
A Fair Go for Fraser Island in Federal funding.....	10

Fraser Island Benefits from Local Government Reforms

In the process of slashing the number of Queensland councils from 156 to 72 Premier Beattie inadvertently did Fraser Island a long overdue favour by bringing it all under the control of a single local authority — the Fraser Coast Regional Council. In this he has FIDO's support.

Ever since 1974 when former Bjelke-Petersen Local Government Minister, Russell Hinze, intervened to divide Fraser Island between Hervey Bay and Maryborough city councils the island has suffered from the lack of consistent land positive local government to support and protect the island's World Heritage values. Until 1974 Fraser Island was administered by the then Burrum Shire Council. However when the Hervey Bay City Council was created, Minister Hinze took away the southern half of the island and gave it to Maryborough to facilitate the exploitation of its timber and mineral resources despite the recommendations of a local government boundaries inquiry. A serious anomaly has existed which has made the integrated administration of the island difficult.

In February 2001 Queensland Premier Peter Beattie promised that if he was re-elected his new government would *(bring) Fraser Island under the planning control of a single government agency*. These three "core promises" were part of the environmental policy in the policy speech:

- * *Giving statutory recognition to Queensland's responsibility to fulfil 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 Cooloola National Park.*

It is regrettable that Fraser Island wasn't brought under the control of a single authority (as recommended in the Fitzgerald Report back in 1996) when Local Government Commissioner Greg Hoffman's review of local authority boundaries in the Great Sandy Region (commissioned by the Goss Government) was stopped in its tracks by the Borbidge Government. There was then the chance to implement the most logical of moves to improve the administration of the island.

Although more than 99% of the island's area is incorporated in the Great Sandy National Park almost 99% of the problems of management of the island emanate from the 1% which is outside the jurisdiction of the QPWS. The settlements are the epicenters of visitor movements. They are also the epicenters of weed infestation and a much wider range of problems including the management of domestic pets, the negative interactions between dingoes and residents and much more.

Fraser Island contributes enormously to the economy of the region. How much benefit from Fraser Island goes to Maryborough and how much goes to Hervey Bay should now no longer be any consideration in how much a mainland based council should be prepared to put into this huge regional economic generator.

It makes so much sense to combine the separate administration of this most significant economic resource, ecological treasure and single bio-geographic unit under a single administration. For more than three decades the two mainland based councils have found it awkward and expensive to maintain separate infrastructures to service the island. There can now be a single more efficient authority which combines and improves on the previous means of dealing with local government issues on the island.

It is most significant that the new Regional Council indeed takes its name from the island.

Iconic Legislation?

FIDO is now encouraged that having moved to bring all of Fraser Island back into one local authority the Beattie Government has also indicated it will do more to ensure that the new local government regime protects World Heritage and iconic areas of Queensland.

Local Government and Planning Minister Andrew Fraser whose department will oversee the new legislation said the iconic status could include areas of state or national significance, areas of historical significance, areas of unique natural environment and World Heritage areas. He said, *"Internationally, Queensland is environmentally unique and there are very few other places that could match our areas of iconic importance."*

Premier Peter Beattie said the Iconic Queensland Strategy would give the force of state law to already existing planning schemes in such environmentally significant and important areas as the Fraser Coast area. He said, *"What the government will do is legislate to ensure those planning schemes now have more grunt and the clout to ensure icons like ... are given even more protection. ... Of course, appropriate development will continue but with the new laws, planning schemes in these areas become more powerful than ever."*

FIDO wrote to the Premier seeking to clarify if this will be a step towards delivering his promises of February 2001.



Waging The War Against Weeds

Since MOONBI 115 FIDO has sponsored three weeding bees at Happy Valley and one at Eurong as well as a special trip to install sign shelters in both Eurong and Happy Valley to alert residents and visitors to these two epicentres of weed infestations of the need to control weeds and avoid further infestation.

Reports of the weeding projects are contained on FIDO's web site: www.fido.org.au.

Happy Valley: These are just some extracts from reports from Laura Simmons who has been coordinating the work of volunteers in Happy Valley

Future Planning: Laura is still looking for volunteers for two more planned working bees in 2007. These are scheduled for: 27th October to 4th November and Saturday 1st December to Sunday 9th December (after exams!) Laura advises that a condition of the program is that each volunteer is expected to complete 35 hours of voluntary weeding work during the week (5 hours per day Sunday to Saturday). The work will be undertaken in the morning so that afternoons are available for free time for guided tours to different locations around the island to experience the true natural beauty including magnificent rainforests, enormous sand blows, giant coloured sand cliffs and crystal clear lakes.

Weeds targeted: Singapore Daisy, Cape Ivy, Corky Passionfruit, Stinking Passionfruit, Edible Passionfruit, Easter Cassia, Lantana, Basket Asparagus, Mother-in-Law Tongue, Green Panic, Broad Leaved Pepper, Brazillian Nightshade. Laura has written full plant species list for middle bushland of Happy Valley township and is concerned that *Abrus precatorious* vine might be a potential weed. ... The large Broad Leaved Pepper's that had re-shot was treated again. Previously these trees had been cut and painted with herbicide. It is necessary for any Broad Leaved Pepper to be frilled with herbicide if the stem diameter is greater than 20cm and re-treated by cutting regrowth and painting as well as scraping back to roots where possible and painting with herbicide. Seed was collected from *Corymbia intermedia*.

Sign Erection Trip: Laura assisted builders, Tony and Paul with transportation and erection of information shelters in Happy Valley and Eurong townships. ... Resorts in both townships were pleased with the sign erection. Eurong Beach Resort requested HBCC 'Dirty Dozen' weed brochures to distribute to those interested. ... Happy Valley Wilderness Retreat has requested to go on a plant/weed identification walk during the next weeding bee. Weed identification and treatment training will be conducted at the same time. ... Laura and Brad walked the boundaries of the Happy Valley township with the National Park ranger to gauge weed infestation and found NW and SW boundary survey pegs. Infestation not too bad the further out of town you go. Interesting finds included ground orchids, huge patches of scrub that are completely free of weed species.



Eurong: The now annual May trip to Eurong led by Ballina based bush regenerators, Stephanie & Julian Lymburner was mainly composed of volunteers from New South Wales. It ended up being one person short after FIDO Honorary Project Officer, John Sinclair, fell off a viewing platform at Seary's Creek in Cooloola National Park shattering his right shoulder. But the show went on. These are some notes from the group's diary:

*Troops assembled at 7.00am for breakfast, clean for the last time, and were kitted up with regenerating implements and marched off to a patch between the resort and the beach, where under the bemused gaze of passing tourists we pulled up our old friend Lantana (*Lantana camara*) and new friends Corky Passionfruit (*Passiflora suberosa*) and Prickly Pear (*Opuntia sp.*) and others. ...*



*... we stopped off to join the crowds of backpackers at Eli Creek. The request to remain silent and appreciate the sounds of this wonderful site, was shattered by the exuberance of youth. Us oldies chose to paddle the cool clear creek waters observing the Native Tibouchina (*Melastoma affine*) and the Climbing Fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*). Here also we spotted the white faced honeyeater, the mistletoe bird and a pardalote. ...*

*We divided up into two groups, one working on the hill behind the resort and the other weeded a huge mound of Fishbone Fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*) at the southern end of the resort. ... The morning's session was in the more upmarket end of town – Second Valley, or at least the swale on the northern edge. A new terror was tackled. MADEIRA VINE (*Anredera cordifolia*)! And also Mother of Millions (*Bryophyllum delagoense*), Green Panic Grass (*Panicum maximum*) and good 'ole' corky passionfruit and the odd Silky Oak (*Grevillea robusta*). Three hours and we had them licked.*

You can help Fraser Island best now by drawing Federal Government's attention to the very inadequate and iniquitous distribution of World Heritage funds amongst Australia's natural sites by both networking as much as possible and both copying and gathering signatures for the petition included with this MOONBI or downloadable from <www.fido.org.au>

Damning Report on Traveston

Despite a Senate inquiry's warnings of unacceptable environmental impacts in its 153-page report released in August, the Queensland Government says it will continue "full steam ahead" with the Traveston Crossing Dam. Anna Bligh described the inquiry's report into the proposed \$1.7 billion mega Mary River dam as "the biggest non-event since the Y2K bug".

The Senate's rural and regional affairs committee report into the dam, labelled it a "political response to a serious problem" while raising concerns about key social and environmental issues. The report said, "This appears to be symptomatic of a politically expedient decision made in a tense political environment and in the face of burgeoning population growth and a reducing water supply."

The committee made just two recommendations but stopped short of calling for the dam to be halted. It urged federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull to broaden a study on the potential environmental impact of the proposed dam, as well as carry out an audit of the approval conditions for the Paradise Dam, on the Burnett River.

In its report the committee singled out three species as being under specific threat from the damming of the Mary River - the Australian lungfish, which is currently listed as vulnerable, the Mary River turtle, listed as endangered and the Mary River cod, also listed as endangered. It also raised concerns about the negative impact on Great Sandy Strait wetlands and World Heritage listed Fraser Island.

The report urged the Queensland Government to explore alternatives, such as raising the Borumba Dam near Noosa, transporting water from northern NSW to south-east Queensland and making greater use of rainwater tanks and recycled water.

FIDO made submissions to the Committee on the impact of the dam on the Ramsar listed Great Sandy Strait and World Heritage listed Fraser Island and Honorary Project Officer John Sinclair appeared before the Inquiry at its Gympie hearings to support FIDO's submissions.

FIDO also made strong submissions that the terms of reference for the Environmental Impact Statement on the Traveston Crossing dam needed to identify the downstream impacts, particularly on Great Sandy Strait and Fraser Island. These criteria are included in the EIS but although the Queensland Government seems determined to bulldoze ahead regardless of the outcome of any study (which they already seem to have pre-empted) the study has to run the gauntlet of the Commonwealth Government's EPBC legislation which seems to be the only chance left to bring some sanity to the best way to address the current and future water needs of South East Queensland.

FIDO is pleased to note that Brisbane's per capita water consumption has fallen so significantly that it is setting anew benchmark for water conservation globally. Let's hope that this can be maintained while better considered options to meet future needs are developed.



More Recognition for Fraser Island

National Heritage Listing: For inexplicable reasons when the Howard Government introduced the new National Heritage List all of the existing World Heritage properties were left off. Finally this anomaly has been rectified and Fraser Island has finally been included on the National Heritage List. This is a welcome move because there were nominations to recognize specific Fraser Island values such as the purity of Fraser Island dingoes being made, whereas recognizing all of the World Heritage values is a more logical basis of recognition. The fact that Fraser Island wasn't included on either the National nor the Queensland Heritage Registers disqualified some funding applications such as a feasibility study for a light rail route on the island. FIDO has moved to correct the Queensland anomaly and has nominated Fraser Island for inclusion on the Queensland Heritage Register which has previously been almost exclusively focused on recognizing Queensland's built and cultural heritage.



Extra WH tick for Fraser Island

AS a result of revision of World Heritage criteria Fraser Island is now listed as meeting three of the four natural criteria whereas it was previously inscribed as meeting only two.

The World Heritage Centre (WHC) has transferred all properties listed under the original 1992 Criteria, and the 2002 Criteria to the unified 2005 Criteria. Hence the WHC has agreed to transfer Fraser Island's original listing for Criterion (ii) geomorphological and biological values; and Criterion (iii) exceptional natural beauty to the following unified 2005 Criteria:

- (vii) to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.

While it is true that Fraser Island is now listed for three World Heritage Criteria, this has not resulted from a review of the values of Fraser Island, but from an administrative decision to standardise the criteria for all World Heritage Areas to the unified 2005 criteria. This transfer does not add any values to the Fraser Island listing.

The Commonwealth Government though has agreed to a renomination of Fraser Island together with Cooloola and the recommendation from scientists when the new material is reviewed is that the extended World Heritage area of Fraser Island and Cooloola will meet all four natural criteria although this is still subject to international adjudication.

A Bigger Footprint at Lake McKenzie?

FIDO was recently alarmed by a proposal put to the QPWS hierarchy to direct about 120,000 people each year to use Lake McKenzie's "second beach". There is currently almost negligible visitor impact on this almost pristine beach.

A majority recommendation from the Site Visitor Capacity Working Group despite strong opposition from conservation interests proposed that while leaving the main Lake McKenzie beach free for the recreation of about 80,000 free and independent travelers annually, 120,000 commercial visitors should leave their footprints on a beach which now wears only one or two thousand. The recommendation seems to be largely driven by the urgent need for new and better toilet facilities at Lake McKenzie and the desire to separate visitors on commercial tours and free and independent travelers

Adverse Impact in Perceptions: FIDO believes that while coming up with a recommendation to manage about 217,000 annual visitors to Lake McKenzie, the proposal has overlooked the preservation of the aesthetics of Fraser Island's best known icon which has vicarious value to millions of other people globally. It seems an excessive extravagance to attempt to reduce visitor density at Lake McKenzie, (negligible compared with Bondi and Surfers Paradise beaches) by opening a new beach.

The profound value of Fraser Island depends on its spaces free of humans. Are we to continue to extend the human footprint when tourists are well catered for already? The profound value of the ocean beaches has been destroyed by the volume of motor vehicles and aircraft that use the beach as a highway and regular landing strip.

FIDO has been assured that we will be consulted over any redevelopment at Lake McKenzie and that there needs to be more consensus before any plans are approved.



This Indonesian Navy sailing ship was washed ashore at Inskip Point by wild weather

Wild weather closes Fraser Island

Fraser Island section of Great Sandy National Park, Inskip Point Recreation Area and the northern section of Cooloola were closed to the public during some extremely wild and very wet weather in late August. It delivered more than 700mm of rain to parts of Cooloola in just 24 hours on 24th August. A large clean-up operation was necessary to clear debris, repair road surfaces and associated drainage at Fraser and Cooloola sections of Great Sandy National Park. FIDO endorses the decision to close the parks and believes that this is a positive move to bring Fraser Island into line with closure policies which apply to other National Parks around Australia. FIDO would like to see road closures on the island when it is apparent that continued use is resulting in unacceptable damage.

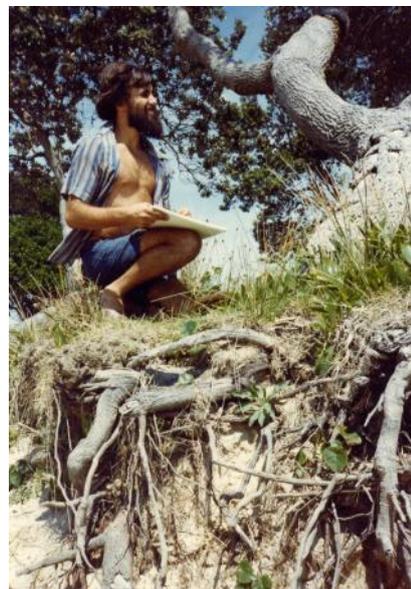
An Evening with Eliza Fraser

A concert at the Queensland Conservatorium on 30th August was based on the story of shipwreck survivor, Eliza Fraser who with her husband who died there gave Fraser Island its name. The concert focused on two aspects of this dramatic and tragic story — the historical facts and its role (along with Fraser Island itself) in inspiring musicians, writers, visual artists and film-makers.

The History: In 1986 FIDO marked the Sesqui-centennial of the shipwreck of the "Stirling Castle" on the Great Barrier Reef and the dramas surrounding the crew as they attempted to reach Moreton Bay by producing a medallion and a tabloid account of the story, "Eliza Fraser's Troubled TIMES". FIDO has now revised and reproduced that history with illustrations in printable A4 PDF format which can be accessed and downloaded at FIDO's web site: <www.fido.org.au>

Artistic Inspiration: The evening with Eliza Fraser was centred around the performance of the epic poem, "Eliza Survivor" by leading poet, Barbara Blackman and set to music by leading composer, Peter Sculthorpe. Following the most impressive recital FIDO had an opportunity to discuss the role of Fraser Island and the story of Eliza Fraser in inspiring artists with Barbara Blackman herself.

Barbara Blackman with her famous artist husband, Charles Blackman visited Fraser Island in 1969. Both were violently ill throughout their stay. This and her experiences growing up in South East Queensland inspired her to write "Eliza Survivor". Barbara rattled off the names of impressive Australians, all close acquaintances of hers who were inspired by the island including Sidney Nolan and Harold Hattam (artists), Judith Wright (poet), Patrick White (writer) Peter Sculthorpe (composer) and Tim Burstall (film-maker). She agrees with her late long-time friend, Judith Wright, that the Fraser Island landscape and its history is to Australian art similar to the significance of England's Lakes District or Constable Country. Australia has very few such important sites. FIDO believes that the aesthetic value of Fraser Island has still to be properly recognized by both the Australian and Queensland Governments.



Artist Erwin Weber sketching on Fraser Island

Fraser Dingoes' Genetic Purity

FIDO believes that the latest review of the dingo management strategy understates the genetic significance of the Fraser Island dingoes by failing to refer to the latest DNA evidence proving FIDO's assertion since the 1980s that the Fraser Island dingoes are the purest in Australia. The significance of this scientific evidence makes it even more imperative that this vitally important gene pool remain viable.

Geneticist Dr Alan Wilton from the University of New South Wales was named the Unsung Hero of Science in 2004 for his research looking at the problem of dingo hybridisation around Australia. Wilton tested the DNA of dingoes from along the east coast of Australia as well as on Fraser Island. **He found that Fraser Island has the last remaining population of purebred dingoes.**

He has warned that dingoes are facing extinction from hybridisation with domestic dogs. *"It's a huge problem. On the mainland 80% to 100% of dingo populations were crossbred with domestic dogs. It's difficult to find any population of purebred animals,"* Dr Wilton said.

The dingo is a native dog that scientists believe was brought to Australia from Asia 4000 to 5000 years ago. Dingoes are a strain of the Asian Wolf as are Papuan wild dogs. Because there is very little genetic variation among dingoes, the population is thought to have started with a single pregnant female, or a small pack of dingoes already closely related.

Wilton said the Fraser Island dingoes had some unique "genetic types" that were not seen among mainland dingoes. This suggests that the population had been isolated for some time. He said the Fraser Island dingoes are at risk because they are not protected. He said his research emphasised the usefulness of preserving the Fraser Island population.

Like FIDO, Dr Wilton is most concerned at the continued culling. In the first 7 months of 2007 three dingoes at Eurong and one at Happy Valley were humanely destroyed. Five were destroyed in 2005. It is most significant that all of the dingoes destroyed for exhibiting aggressive or dangerous behaviour were previously fed by well meaning people in the townships.

"If they stayed in the wild they'd be OK," Dr Wilton said.

Since 2001, when a nine-year-old boy was mauled to death, there have been more than 2000 incidents involving dingoes on the island. Immediately after that incident 28 dingoes were shot. Since that initial cull a further 50 dingoes have been put down on the island. While FIDO is concerned at the continuing cull there is no evidence that the viability of the remaining dingo population is at risk. However FIDO does support the new strategy that relies on reinstating the dingoes' natural wariness towards people. This is helped by QPWS hazing policies including the use of slingshots aimed at dingoes approaching too closely to humans. Lay-persons may be recruited to help rangers pursue the hazing policy.

Feeding of dingoes – deliberate or inadvertent – on the island remains a major concern and reducing the level of human-dingo interaction, particularly feeding, is the key to the survival of a healthy dingo population on Fraser Island.

Fraser Island Visitation

Year	FIT's	VCT	Total	CTs%
2002	153,847	199,424	353,271	56.5%
2006	168,845	162,497	331,342	49.0%
% Change	+9.7%	-18.5%	-6.1%	N/A

FIT = Free & Independent Travellers
VCT = Visitors on Commercial Tours

Table 1 shows the changes in visitor numbers to Fraser Island in percentage terms. The table is based on data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The main elements to note are that from the 2002 to the 2006 years:

1. Aggregate visitation fell by 6.1 %
2. After a decline in 2005 independent traveller (private 4WDs) visitation increased by 9.7%
3. Visitors on commercial tours dropped by 6.1%
4. The most significant change is that the percentage of Fraser Island visitors carried on commercial tours dropped from 56.5% of all Fraser Island visitations carried in 2002 to 49% in 2006.

Comment: Statistics shown in a similar table comparing 2002 and 2005 in MOONBI 114 contained some inaccuracies which suggested a much higher proportion of visitors on Fraser Island commercial tours. However the decline in FIT visitors during 2003-2005 has now been reversed and there is now almost equal proportions of FITs and VCTs. FIDO believes that the decline in visitor around 2002 reflected some cost sensitivity at the time when the price of both fuel and ferry fees rose abruptly and coincidentally. In the future as backpackers who are currently classified as FITs are included in the VCT category, the proportion of those classified as being on commercial tours is expected to change very significantly. It is estimated that what are now categorized as FIT backpackers may represent about 15% to 20% of all Fraser Island visitation.



Traffic jam at Indian Head as many heavily loaded vehicles going to the Fraser Island Fishing Expo at Orchid Beach are delayed by dozens of other vehicles being bogged in the loose dry sand on the bypass track.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Butchulla Elders Disenfranchised

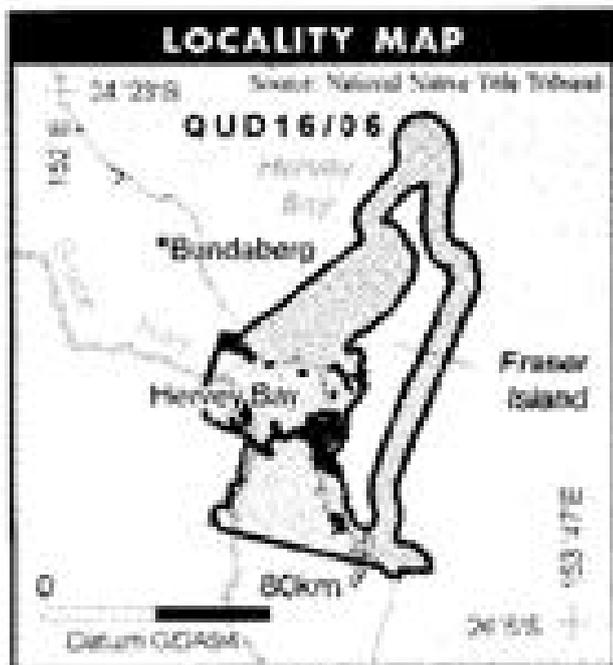
Hervey Bay MP and now Queensland 'environment' Minister, Andrew McNamara told Parliament that loopholes in Federal Government laws enabled Butchulla elders to be removed from title native negotiations in an emerging practice labelled as "claim swapping and tribe hopping". He said that Queensland indigenous leaders are being stopped from making claims for native title by Aboriginal people with little or no established link to a tribe or its land.

The laws give some groups a lucrative income for advising the private sector and government agencies on culturally sensitive sites.

Respected Aboriginal leader Marie Wilkinson, 74, was her were not from among several elders ejected from the Butchulla people's claim to land around Hervey Bay and Fraser Island. Ms Wilkinson said she was disgusted at being removed from her own tribe's claim which she had worked on for more than a decade. She said some of the people who replaced the area and had been unable to establish a family connection to the Butchulla people. "The only reason they are on the claim is because they think they are going to make a lot of money," Ms Wilkinson said.

The meeting to oust Ms Wilkinson and another Butchulla Elder, Mrs Frances Gala was organised by the Gurang Land Council, which acts for a host of claims in Queensland. A bid late last year to overturn the meeting's decision was rejected by the Federal Court.

Additional Claim: On 29 August the Native Claim Tribunal published a public notice of a further Butchulla Native Title Claim which seems to complement an earlier but as yet unresolved Native Title claim for the whole of Fraser Island. The notification does not indicate whether the claimants in the latest claim which is based mainly on the marine areas surrounding Fraser Island which are mainly within the Great Sandy Marine Park are ---???



Fined \$1500 Plus for Feeding Dingoes

A Brisbane man has received a substantially increased penalty after challenging an infringement notice for leaving food where dingoes could find it on Queensland's Fraser Island.

After contesting a \$225 infringement notice for leaving food out at a campsite for dingoes, Brisbane man, Kristian Walsh, was convicted, had the fine increased to \$500 and was ordered to pay \$1,500 in costs in Maryborough Magistrates' Court. Walsh was issued with the original 'on-the-spot' infringement in April after QPWS officers saw three dingoes at his campsite in the middle of the night, and watched one take a bag of rubbish. He was found to have contravened a section of the Recreation Areas Management By-Law 1991 which says that campers must keep their food where animals can't access it.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service regional director Wolf Sievers said, "Dingo management on Fraser Island is a high priority for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service".

Strong Endorsement for Light Rail

In a very succinct Email to FIDO before he stepped down as chairman of Tourism Australia, former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fisher, said, "You can publicly quote me at any time along the following lines: 'Light rail of Cane Gauge namely 2 feet width is the obvious solution to Fraser Island internal transport and will greatly help the tourism expansion envisaged for Fraser Island. It is a whole lot more energy efficient than the current 4WD crazy saga with a lot less environmental footprint' - Tim Fischer, former Chairman Tourism Australia"

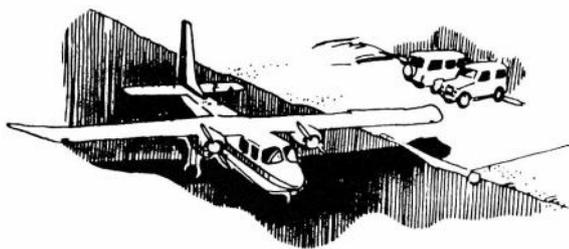
Managers Change at Kingfisher

In June, John Johansen who has 25 years' experience in the hospitality industry was appointed as General Manager Kingfisher Resort to replace Ivor Davies. John has extensive resort and food and beverage management experience from the Yarra Valley as well as 9 years in Papua New Guinea.

Ivor Davies who was based at Kingfisher for the past 12 years will continue as the Group General Manager of the Kingfisher Bay Resort Group of companies, which includes Kingfisher Bay Resort, Eurong Beach Resort, Fraser Explorer Tours and Fraser Island Barges. He will be based in Hervey Bay.

Cooloola World Heritage Nomination Proceeding

At the 15th meeting of the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) held at Cairns in early June, Australian environment ministers developed a Heritage 'Tentative List' for consideration over the next ten years, as sought under the Convention. They have agreed to convene a workshop in Victoria to shape this indicative list of potential nominations but they have agreed that the new tentative list shouldn't delay existing submissions by the WA Government on Ningaloo Reef-Cape Range or by Queensland on the Cooloola extension to Fraser Island which are at the head of the queue for nomination.



\$1M Fraser Visitor Centres Upgrades

The new \$503,000 visitor information centre and QPWS office at Dundubara was completed in mid 2007. This complements the Eurong centre that was refurbished in 2006 at a cost of \$430,000. The Eurong Centre includes visitor information, a well equipped incident control section and office space for up to 15 staff. The incident control component will help QPWS in the handling of possible emergency situations with assistance from the Police, State Emergency Services and Rural Fire and Queensland Ambulance Services. The original building at Eurong was extended and a complete internal fit-out done to ensure that the centre, which is now the main operational base for the Southern Fraser Island Management Unit, met current standards and expectations.

Concern Over Visitor Centre Staffing

Announcements about the Visitor Centres sparked some strong comments about the staffing of such centres on Fraser Island. One irate Fraser Island regular contacted FIDO to ask, "Why should the state government spend another \$500, 000.00 on Dundubara QPWS when the Eurong Facility is never opened (well hardly) for public use?" That raised a number of questions including reports of people attempting to ring the Eurong Office within the scheduled Office Hours to receive a pre-recorded message to tell them the scheduled office hours when the public should call the office.

Although the EPA publicly claims "community consultation" as one of its top three priorities it is not easy to find officers to consult with. Unfortunately there are always some reasons given for why the Visitor Centres aren't open but without anyone actually keeping records of times and dates when these infuriating, out of schedule closures occur there can be no means of ascertaining just how valid the excuses are.

Will a White Elephant be Finished?

It is of some concern that an urgently needed amenities block at Dundubara has stood unfinished, a white elephant for years, awaiting the connection to a waste disposal unit and that continues to be the case while the Visitor Centre took priority. FIDO believes that Fraser Island visitors to Dundubara would prefer to have the new amenities block usable than the new Visitor Centre which is more for the amenity of staff than it is for the benefit of visitors. The latest information is that about \$50,000 will be allocated to develop a design for sewage treatment at Dundubara and Waddy Point campgrounds in the 2007-08 financial year and this will be a precursor to even knowing how much capital will need to be allocated in some future capital works budget.

In the meantime a higher priority seems to be assigned to anew toilet block at Lake McKenzie. Both are overdue.

Beach levy considered

The Queensland Government is proposing to turn Cooloola into a Regional Area Management (RAM) zone and is considering an environment levy similar to one on Fraser Island. That would mean that future visitors to Teewah Beach via Noosa North Shore could soon be paying \$30 for the privilege.

The former environment minister said the working group was established to examine vehicle access, camping, general recreation and conservation/protection issues and to help ensure the area retained its integrity and attractions.

Before the Queensland Government bundled various local authorities together, the Noosa Council was cautiously supportive of the RAM declaration, but concerned it would be left footing the bill without receiving any funds. The council has submitted its ideas to the government on how to best manage the area. "Ninety-five per cent of people cross at Noosa River in Tewantin - it's our infrastructure, which people of the shire have paid for." deputy mayor Frank Pardon said.



Fraser Is fishing expo sells Toyotas

The Fraser Island Fishing Expo wasn't just confined to the fishing. Toyota Australia used the event and Fraser Island to help sell ORVs. Toyota claims that more than 300 test drives in 4WDs took place over the course of the week with competitors relishing the chance to put the vehicles through their paces in true off-road conditions. The off-road Toyota evaluation drive track was high on the list of things for the 3000 competitors and their entourages at the Orchid Beach Fishing Expo to experience. Also helping the sales pitch was the nightly entertainment.

Litter Blitz Awards

During the annual weekend blitz to clean-up Fraser Island in January this year, 59 cubic metres of rubbish was collected, and 35 bags were also filled with weeds removed from strategic sites across the island. The Queensland 4WD Association organized the event which was sponsored Toyota and Oz Hire. The number of people involved in the clean up weekend has more than doubled over the past three years with 935 participants from 21 4WD clubs

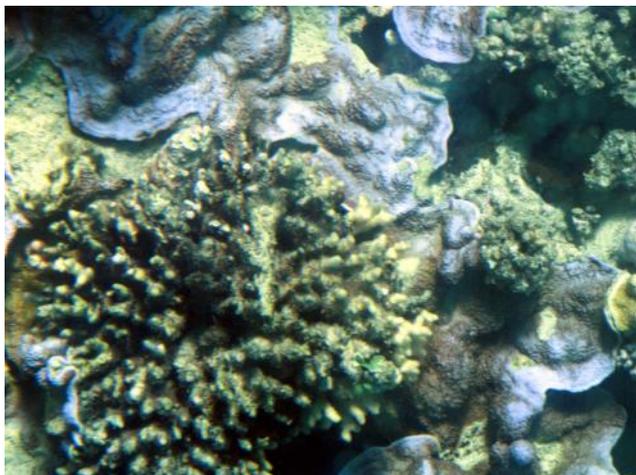
The QPWS's Fraser Island team which helped to coordinate the clean-up has received an EPA award for Excellence. Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr presented the award for achieving 'outstanding environmental and conservation outcomes through excellence in building relationships with external partners'.

The partnership has also won official recognition from the Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Beach Challenge 2006 with Fraser Island's Seventy Five Mile Beach winning the Litter Prevention Award for the Central Queensland-Wide Bay region.

More Impacts from Weather Extremes

As FIDO continues to closely monitor the environmental impacts of climate change, we have recently had a chilling hint of the severity of the impacts due to extremes which were referred to in the Backgrounder. It is not correct to assume that global warming will avoid record and devastating lower temperatures as Winter 2007 has shown throughout Queensland. June 20 was one of Queensland's coldest days on record. The following article summarizes a report on an alarming impact in the marine environment but it is probable that there are multiple similar but unrecorded impacts on the terrestrial environment. It certainly will impact on the Great Sandy Marine Park where the extent of the resources is just being discovered.

Corals Suffer Severely: Strong and sustained southerly winds that brought heavy rain to much of southeast Queensland in June and July triggered coral bleaching that is normally associated with the extremes of hot weather linked to climate change. Scientists say the bleaching has been caused by a combination of cold waters, winds and air temperatures hitting exposed reefs around the Capricorn-Bunker group of islands at the southern end of the reef. While other sections of the reef appear to have been spared by being fully submerged or far enough north to avoid the worst of the cold snaps in June and July, bleaching has been recorded by researchers on Heron Island. The comfort zone for coral is between 19C and 27C but during the big chill, temperatures had fallen to 8C. While bleaching from extreme heat affects entire reefs, the cold bleaching appears to be isolated to the tips of wide areas of coral exposed to the chill. CSIRO oceanographer David Griffin said the only noticeably cold currents were further south around Fraser Island. This suggests water was being cooled at the surface by the air temperature.



Mapping of Coral Gardens

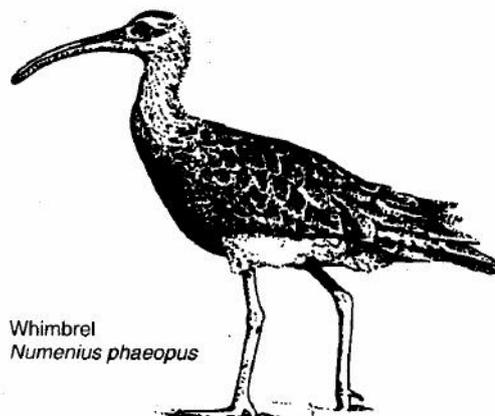
Maria Zann (University of Queensland) in a collaborative research project with the QPWS has been mapping the inshore coral communities of Hervey Bay and the northern Great Sandy Strait. Maria estimates that the Hervey Bay and GSS coral reefs and sponge gardens cover at least 500 hectares and possibly up to 600 hectares. Most of the reefs have a high percentage cover of coral. Field work has shown that the reefs are comprised of many species of hard and soft corals that provide habitat for numerous species of reef fish such as damselfish, angelfish, butterflyfish, blennies, gobies, wrasses etc. Sea snakes were also commonly encountered during field work.

Mapping Wader Roosts

The QPWS, Burnett Mary Regional Group and the Queensland Wader Study Group have cooperated in a project that included region-wide identification of migratory shorebird roost sites and important nesting areas for resident shorebirds (including threatened species) from Tin Can Bay north to Agnes Waters, including Fraser Island.

The 2006 the Burnett Coast Shorebird Mapping Project found that *"The surveys for shorebirds on Fraser Island have shown that both the south-eastern and north-western beaches are important for shorebirds. One migratory species, Grey Plover, was present in internationally significant numbers at North Spit on the south-eastern beach. Another migratory species, Whimbrel, was also found in nationally significant numbers on the north-western beaches. The abundance of both species on Fraser Island is higher than anywhere else in south-eastern Queensland. This makes these sites of great regional importance for these species"*.

QPWS had previously identified Moon Point and Hook Point as important roosting sites for migratory shorebirds on Fraser Island, including Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Grey-tailed Tattler, Wandering Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Double-banded Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Lesser Sand Plover and Pacific Golden Plover. Overall, 39 new roosts were identified.



Fire Regime Falling Further Behind

About 6,500 hectares (about 4%) of Fraser Island were approved for burning in the 2006-07 period. This is made up of 23 prescribed burns of which most were property protection burns which have been stated to be the QPWS's top priority. FIDO believes that the relegation of environmental burns to such a low priority is adversely impacting on the island's World Heritage values. Only two of the planned fires exceeded 1000 ha in extent and the next three largest areas proposed for burning were less than 200 ha. The other 18 fires were less than 100 ha. Most of the burns for property protection were completed and it is again the environmental burns which missed out. Fire is an important part of the ecology of Fraser Island. FIDO believes that it plays a vital role. At the current rate of fire prescriptions, it would take more than 25 years to cover Fraser Island once and while FIDO believes that some areas such as rainforest should not be burnt, many areas need much more fire frequency than is being practiced.

From Some Skimpy Reports

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service provides members of the CAC with monthly reports of all matters relevant to the whole of the Great Sandy District. Many of these matters are ???relevant to the terms of reference for the advisory committees and the reports are limited to a single A4 page. However these are not provided monthly. For inexplicable reasons they are withheld until two or three days before the quarterly meetings and then bundled up and sent to committee members. There is speculation that this stalling is to prevent too much scrutiny of what is going on. Below are most of the cryptic notes relating to Fraser Island:

From March 2007, Received 12 June

Removal of the wreck of the Cherry Venture practically complete and commemorative Interpretation Shelter erected on site.

Hook Point camping and parking nodes and 'Dump Ezy' chemical toilet service facility completed in preparation for beach closure.

Construction of new Dundubara VIC/Office (election Commitment) ahead of schedule.

Work has commenced upgrading Exploration Track fire control line (Category 1, Fraser Island).

From April 2007, Received 12 June

All planned burn proposals and fire initiative funding applications submitted and approved by Fire Referral Group and this season's planned burns have commenced.

Welcome Wall and Art Built-in sandstone sculpture installed at Eurong Ranger Base.

Final Aircraft Management Strategy Working Group meeting.

From May 2007, Received 12 June

3 Fraser Island 2007 asset protection burns completed as per Fraser Island Fire Management Strategy.

Increased on ground Dingo management/activity undertaken over Easter to Labour Day holiday period.

All Fraser Island 2006/2007 Fire Initiative funded projects complete.

Dundubara office project ahead of schedule and on budget.

From June 2007, Received 27 August

All fire and pest initiative projects completed for the financial year.

Dundubara Office Cap Works project finished by 30 June.

Installation of Eurong solar array and submersible pump.

Funded through Agency Minor plant and equipment scheme.

Reduced client service delivery due to reduction in staff numbers Fraser North.

Great Sandy District is continuing with planned and protection burns.

Dundubara and Waddy Point campground Dorriggo panels updated.

Central Station campground wind closure signage completed.



From July 2007, Received 27 August

District burn program on schedule - 7 Fraser Island asset protection burns completed and 8 Cooloola planned burns completed.

Developed District Procedural Guide for Staff Travel, Rosters and Accommodation on Fraser Island.

Commenced the selection and recruitment process for 17 positions within the Great Sandy District including 6 new Marine Park positions.

All related works for Hook Pt beach closure – camp areas, access tracks and beach access modifications completed. Road surface and corner alignment work in process.

Staff have moved into completed Dundubara office.

Aircraft Management Strategy Working Group recommendations finalised.

Great Sandy District hosted a Local Govt Conference field trip to Fraser Island – 38 participants toured Lake Mackenzie, Central Station, Eli Creek and the Maheno.

Eli Creek (Fraser Island) boardwalk replacement commences next month.

From August 2007, Received 27 August

Excellent 2006-07 overall budget management and expense control with fire, pest and asset projects on time and on budget.

Fraser Island Road Management Strategy completed.

2007 burn program proceeding well and due for completion by end of August - weather permitting.

Anticipate 95% completion rate this season.

Community fire protection plans completed and implemented for Fraser Island townships and resorts.

Increased negative Dingo activity northern Fraser Island due to Tailor season.

Large-scale recruitment drive to fill 17 Great Sandy vacancies underway

Aircraft commuting trial proving a success for staff involved.

Dundubara and Waddy sewerage treatment plants project commenced

Working Group recommendations for Great Sandy Aircraft Management Strategy delayed.

Inaugural meeting of Great Sandy District Sustainability Group.

Risk assessment on the wreck of the *Maheno* underway

First Fraser Island World Heritage Area Indigenous Advisory Committee scheduled for 30 August.



Aerial photo of Happy Valley 1974. The sandblows have virtually been completely colonized since.