



## Friends of Fraser Incorporated

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# NEWSLETTER

PO Box 323  
Ferry Hills Q 4055  
Website: [www.friendsoffraserisland.org](http://www.friendsoffraserisland.org)

Ph: (07) 3216 5452  
Fax: (07) 3216 5863  
Email: [friends@friendsoffraserisland.org](mailto:friends@friendsoffraserisland.org)

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In the three months since the last newsletter, there has been sporadic activity. Fraser Island continues to attract some controversial activity but little positive action occurs. We still do not know anything about the revision of the 1994 Management Plan. There are those who believe that the Plan is invalid and in fact the 1988 Plan is the one that should be being followed. Irrespective of which one is the valid or legal one, we'd just like one of them to be followed.

**Policy Planning:** It seems that the Government operates on an ad hoc basis and makes policy on the run without any reference to either Plan, or for that matter the Community Advisory Committee which is really not representative of any particular community associated with Fraser Island. A case in point is the camping area at Indian Head. An interstate visitor wrote to the Minister for Environment pointing out the disgusting state of the area. A reply indicated that within a short time from writing (April 2002) the matter would be rectified with an organised camp ground with toilet facilities being created. Then, this year, after nothing had been done, it was stated by the Minister's office that camping at Indian head would be banned. The duplicity of the Government has to be experienced to be believed.

**Questions:** Along with others, I emailed the questions in the last newsletter to my State Member of Parliament. My communication was acknowledged, but at the time of preparing this newsletter I have received no answer. Yet, I find that commercial organisations are able to worm their way into the Minister's Office and obtain instant answers, most of which are contrary to the type of answer we would want.

**Meeting with Leader of Opposition:** On Tuesday April 1 (an auspicious date!) three of the executive met with Hon. Lawrence Springborg, the leader of the Opposition. We received a good hearing and Mr Springborg expressed sympathy with our position. For us to be effective we need to meet with as many decision makers as we can and plans are under way for deputations with other Party Leaders and Parliamentary representatives.

**Resignation:** It was with sadness that we heard the news of the resignation of Dr John Kingston, Member for Maryborough because of ill health. Although John had no electoral responsibility for Fraser Island, like many of us he appreciated the uniqueness of the place and supported our efforts valiantly. We wish John better health and a successful retirement.

**By-Election:** With a by-election to occur in Maryborough on April 26, we need members in that electorate to be actively involved in asking the various candidates searching questions about policy pertaining to Fraser Island. There is a tendency by some in the political process to want to woo the 'green' vote. Much of the stress we experience on Fraser Island is an outcome of that policy. Unless we stand up with cogent arguments in favour of our point of view further inroads into our traditional freedoms on Fraser Island will occur. Ignore Party Policy, what we want is a representative who will represent the electors. They cannot do that unless we inform them of our point of view. On a formal basis we will approach each candidate with our 'manifesto'. This also needs to be done on an individual basis.

Those wanting assistance in formulating questions, letters or other communications, please contact Secretary Dean, and help will be afforded you. This is a golden opportunity for us so let's use it!

**Financial Grants:** It is interesting to note that those organisations that received grants from the Minister are the ones that seem to be used by the Minister to transmit information that would seem to us to be unpopular. For example, the question of free range camping has been bubbling along for some time. It was in a statement issued by a backpacker organisation in Hervey Bay that seemed to indicate that a ban on that style of camping is in the wind. Their statement coupled with the Minister's excuse of dingo danger at Christmas gives serious concern for the future of traditional camping on Fraser Island. We will investigate the process through which we have to go to get on the list of recipients of grants from the Department of Environment. Maybe then we will receive some attention at the political level.

**Personnel Changes:** In the last few months there have been some significant changes to the personnel in charge of Fraser Island.

The area manager is now Mr Rob Allen who has taken over largely from Lachlan Fullerton. The Senior Ranger on the Island is Mr Alan Dyball who is stationed at Eurong. Ranger in charge at Waddy Point is now Mr Doug Long who is also responsible for Dundaburra. Friends of Fraser is pleased that the Government has noted our constant criticisms on the management of Fraser Island and we look forward to some changes to the management culture and that those now in office will be more responsive to the wishes of the regular users of Fraser Island.

**Barges:** At the time of preparing this newsletter I still have not heard of the results of the tenders called for the operation of barges from Inskip Point.

**Dingoes:** Once again dingoes have been in the news following an incident at Yidney Rocks. Quite rightly, a warning about the danger of trying to befriend dingoes was issued especially as it approaches mating time. The sad thing is that following the above incident, it was reported that the male dingo in question was 'relocated'. Not sure what that means but the result will be that a dog seeking dominance was removed from the territory. If it was the only male in the area it will mean that yet another family of dingo will be in serious trouble.

**Camping Show:** We are preparing to mount a display at the Queensland Caravan, Camping and Recreation Show to be conducted from June 4 to June 10 both dates inclusive. The Show is open from 10 am to 6 pm daily. For manning the booth to be comfortable, it is desirable that we have assistance for two hourly intervals. This means a minimum of 4 persons daily. Because it gets very busy at times it would be better if we had four couples daily. The appeal then is for as many as possible to contact Secretary, Dean with an indication of just when you can help.

If past experience is any guide, it is too much to expect any one person to be there constantly so for a good result we need support. It will cost in the vicinity of \$1500 to have the display and we do really need to project our image to counter the enormous weight of Government propaganda

**Birds:** The World Wildlife Fund recently issued media statements indicating that it was the fault of 4WD drivers that there is a diminishing number of pied oystercatchers on Fraser Island. This is yet another example of an organisation semi funded by the Government using their influence with the media to make further inroads into the freedoms enjoyed traditionally by visitors to Fraser Island. The truth of the matter is more to do with the starving of dingoes rather than the passage of vehicles. The birds which are very timid nest in the dunes but usually on the lee side. Hopefully, vehicles are not travelling anywhere near the nesting places. It is unfortunate however that some of the rental vehicles do travel in the soft sand at the top of the beach. This occurs because the rental companies insist that their vehicles are not driven anywhere near the salt water. I'm sure we can empathise with that but some of the renters with limited English take the instruction literally and do drive too far up the dunes, hardly the fault of regular 4WD drivers though.

**Cost of Repair:** The Minister with much fanfare announced that the boardwalk at Wangoolba Ck at Central Station would be rebuilt at an estimated cost of \$700,000. The rebuilt Eli Ck boardwalk is supposed to be completed by Easter. I have seen no cost for that project. The Wangoolba Ck project is 250 metres long, so that is \$2800 per metre. Although we attempted through the media to flush out just how these things are costed, we have received the usual response – silence. Previous questions in this area have revealed that a number of Departments have their finger in the pie and all sorts of monies are paid out for engineering reports, planning reports etc., even though the whole project is undertaken by a Government Department. It is simply money wasted.

**Fire Management:** Fortunately since our last newsletter there has been reasonable rain on the Island. It is fair to say however that the drought is not yet broken. Fire

management or the lack of it is still a great concern. Members may have seen the 60 Minute programme on Sunday 16 March. The programme was less than complimentary of the actions of the Parks Service and their policies. I also noted that the Federal Minister for Forestry plans to organise a full-scale enquiry into the disastrous fires that occurred in the Southern States. In view of all the publicity and the self-defence from sections of National Parks in NSW and Victoria, some interesting outcomes may occur. If so it will be very relevant to Fraser Island too.

**Membership:** Since the last newsletter you will have received an invoice for membership renewal. Thank you to those who have responded and a special thank you to those who sent donations. For those who have forgotten or mislaid the invoice, please contact us and we'd be grateful to you for responding. We need the memberships and the money to mount our campaigns to redress the wrongs of administration on Fraser Island.

**Community Advisory Committee:** As part of the administration of World Heritage Areas the Legislation a Community Advisory Committee is to be formed. In 1998 a Community Advisory Committee was formed. With the change of Government in 1999 the Committee has been changed. It now consists of:

**Chairman:** Mr Noel Playford, former mayor of Noosa Shire.

**Representing conservation groups:** Mr John Sinclair, a tour operator and resident of Sydney, Mr George Haddock, National Parks Association and Mrs R Cook.

**Representing Resident Landholders:** Mr Eric Paraps, Fraser Island Association.

**Landowners Proxy:** Mrs Norma Hannant, Cathedral Beach.

**Representing Commercial Interests:** Ms Angela Burger Eurong Beach Resort, Mr Gary Smith, Kingfisher Bay Resort & Village, Mr Phil Augustine, Qld Assn of 4WD Clubs.

**Representing Tourism Interests:** Mr Shane Boyd, Fraser Island Top Tours, Mr Mike West, Fraser Island Safaris.

**Representing Aboriginal Interests:** Ms Frances Gala, Ms Marie Wilkinson.

**Representing Recreational Interests:** Mr Sid Boshammer, Sunfish Qld, Fraser Coast Branch.

As you will see from that list, there is really no one on that so-called community advisory committee who is there to represent the average visitor to Fraser Island. We will be making representations to the relevant ministers State and Federal to have a representative of our Association on the Committee.

**Distribution:** Please feel free to distribute this newsletter as widely as possible. It is a medium we need to use to spread our message. If you have any information for our newsletter please send the material to our Secretary and it will be considered for the next newsletter the deadline of which is 9th July 2003.

Lin Powell

Yours faithfully,

**For Friends of Fraser Incorporated**