

## **Save Fraser Island Dingoes Inc.**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **There are two sides to every story..**

A recent article published in the Mar/April Issue of Australian Geographic, 'Finding Fraser Island' has caused much controversy and debate. The contentious Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS) is again under scrutiny, public opinion has caused an outpouring of letters to the editor.

Australian Geographic, in their latest edition, have published only two of the hundreds received. Therefore SFID would like to clarify statements made, as there are a number of false assumptions regarding the Fraser Island dingo.

It is regrettable that rangers are verbally abused and it is certainly not condoned by SFID or Conservation groups associated with SFID. The abuse has stemmed from reports of gross cruelty to the animals and has no relevance to the persecution by QPWS of Jennifer Parkhurst, or the subsequent court case, as suggested in the article.

The public are concerned about the treatment Fraser Island dingoes are subjected to by Park Rangers. It is a sad state of affairs that the rangers have lost the confidence of the people, but this can be attributed to the following strategies implemented by QPWS staff:

Hazing. (shooting animals with clay pellets) causing fear, pain and injury. Has been witnessed by visitors causing distress to families.

Tagging animals for destruction. Causing fear, pain and injury.

Lethal Control. Destroying animals they deem 'troublesome.' Qld National Park's definition is 'humane destruction'. By declaring it is 'humane' does not make it so and the public are appalled at the continued destruction of animals.

Trapping. Soft Jaw traps have been known to cause vascular constriction leading to necrosis (death of tissue) and restraining animals has lead to death by 'severe fatal hyperthermia'. This occurred during the Satellite Tracking program. (Necropsy Report 20/5/11)

These methods of 'control' are now under review, and it is this harassment of the Fraser Island dingo that has turned the public against QPWS staff.

The Satellite tracking program may determine dingo movements but it cannot determine the number of *effective breeding* pairs, which, according to experts, is the most important criteria for determining a sustainable and viable population. Therefore it is debatable whether the expenditure of \$70,000 on this project can be justified

Claims by QPWS that they spend hours talking to people at campsites (1200 last April) is also

debatable, as residents and visitors all concur they rarely see a ranger, apart from a vehicle driving by on the beach.

It is also regrettable that Ms. Parkhurst is continually condemned for 'habituating' a pack which lead to their destruction. Although QPWS consider 'habituation' the main cause of aggression it is not the conclusion of scientists and researchers. ... *'Lethal control and the associated fracturing of predator social structure is the primary driver of dangerous and aggressive behaviour.'* (Adam O'Neill. C&A Environmental Services.) Lethal Control is practised extensively on Fraser Island.

The pack referred to was also subjected to another 'control' method, aversive conditioning (shock collars) were trialled . This experiment sent an electric current to 'encourage' the dingoes away from beaches and visitor areas. This was a controversial study and could be considered to have changed the normal behaviour of the animals, these were the dingoes later destroyed as 'problem' animals.

The current QPWS policy of incident reporting has resulted in dingoes being destroyed due to incorrect ranger observations and uneducated visitor comments. It exhibits a fundamental lack of understanding of normal dingo behaviour and is also under review.

The FIDMS is a document of inconsistencies, lack of appropriate research, and can be considered ineffectual and detrimental to the future sustainability of the Fraser Island Dingo.

Conservation of Fraser Island's biodiversity, natural heritage and cultural values will depend on the outcome of the government review, which is to be completed by December 2012. The future of the Fraser Island dingo is now in LNP hands, it is important we monitor the new decision makers and ensure the dingo is protected and respected and remains an integral part of World Heritage Listed Fraser Island..

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