



**To Whom it May Concern, 19/4/11**

**I write to you in the matter of Fraser Island, and in regard to the mismanagement of the Fraser Island World Heritage Area, by the Queensland Government, and particularly in relation to Fauna mis-Management.**

While the whole Island is a mess, with many examples of funding waste, erosion, destruction, mayhem, and over-visitation, my primary concern since 1990 has been with the fauna mismanagement.

In 1989 almost all of Fraser Island was declared a National Park. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service took over the management of Fraser Island from the Forestry. The first thing they did was kill and/or remove all the wild brumbies and cattle on the Island. The cruelty involved in that exercise is a story in itself. Then they closed all the tips, and stopped fishermen from leaving fish scraps on the beach for the dingoes. Dingo numbers at this time were thought to be around 300, although there had never been a scientific count. Within a year or so, the dingoes had eaten most of the natural wildlife and were starving.

The first ever recorded case of harassment of campers for food occurred in 1990. In 1994-5, after more harassment of campers, QPWS decided to kill a few dingoes. They are thought to have killed about 50. Of course, they shot the harmless and easily found animals that were being fed by residents and resort staff. Dingo clans were fractured, young dogs were left without parents to teach them, alpha males and females were killed. 47 dingo skulls later turned up at the Queensland Museum. The remaining dingoes were still starving, and the harassment of campers by dingoes continued. In 1997 the QPWS produced their Fraser Island Draft Dingo Management Strategy. It was an awful document, and recommended using electric cattle prods, non-lethal poison baits to discourage them from eating human food, throwing fireworks at them, using bull-whips, shooting the dingoes with rubber bullets, and more killing. Feeding them human food with poison baits of lithium chloride, to make them sick, had already been trialed in 1996 by QPWS.



**Above, one of the Fraser Island dingoes in 2004**

Letters sent to the Queensland RSPCA in 1997 about the cruelty involved in this baiting, still remain unanswered. The Dingo Plan still didn't address the real issue, how to provide food for the starving dogs. Most groups rejected it out of hand. This draft plan sat in limbo for nearly three years, and the 37 submissions to the plan were ignored. Several letters to the relevant Minister about the status of the Draft produced no response. Harassment of campers by dingoes continued. In June, 2001, in the first ever confirmed dingo fatality in Australia, the tragic death of a child on Fraser Island dominated the world media.

Overriding any consultation or management processes that were under way, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie immediately ordered a dingo kill. I was in Brisbane, and tried to get a meeting with the Environment Minister, then Dean Wells, but he had locked himself in his room and wouldn't come out. Indigenous groups and the Wilderness Society went to Court to gain an injunction to stop the kill. They failed, because they never had enough time to present a substantial case, and the Judge ordered that no more than 30 dingoes be killed, (based on erroneous media reports that there were 200 resident dingoes) and the kill must stop by Saturday evening, regardless. 28 of the native dogs were shot, brutally and unnecessarily. Allegations of cruelty were made to the Queensland RSPCA, but the RSPCA, who had just received a \$250,000 grant from the Queensland Government, did not take any action. Fortunately, some residents moved some younger dogs out of harms way.



**Above; A Fraser Island dingo...current photo, taken Feb 2010.**



**Above; A wild dingo in a NSW National Park...current photo, April 2010. But the Queensland Government claims the Fraser Island dingoes are naturally skinny, and are not starving!**

Because the Government had an urgency to kill as many dingoes as possible before the deadline, and to shift the blame for this fatality from themselves to the dingoes, again the easily accessible dogs were killed first. These included the many dingoes that lay around doing no harm to anyone. The Eurong group, and the clan of beautiful golden dogs, which lived around the Orchid beach servo and store, were killed. These animals lived around the servo, never worrying anyone, and were a constant source of delight to tourists and visitors to the northern part of the Island. Some of the indigenous owners of the Island sent the Premier a bill for \$1500 dollars compensation per dog, which was never paid. They also started to build a fence around a camping area near Dilli Village, as a gesture to keep people away from the dingoes.

So then the inevitable happened again. Within a few days, other dogs moved in to take their place, and one camping area had to be closed, because they were not allowed, under the court decision, to kill any more. The figure of 200 dingoes on the Island was a guesstimate by QPWS that was cited in the three years old Draft Dingo Management Plan that was roundly criticised by most parties. Our information, based on reports from residents and visitors, and our own experiences on the Island, is that at that time, there may have been only between 50 and 80 dingoes left on the Island, prior to the latest kill. There still hasn't been an accurate scientific survey done on the dingo population.

For three days, the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> May 2001 I again visited Fraser Island with a few other conservationists. During our stay I spoke to many people, tourists, residents, workers at the resorts, and campers about dingoes. Everyone I spoke to was appalled at the recent dingo cull. Many locals were afraid that the QPWS would start aerial dropping poison baits. In spite of QPWS stating many times in the past that they do not use 1080 in or around National Parks, in a story in the Courier Mail 22<sup>nd</sup> May, they admit that they do. While on the Island, I helped the indigenous people to feed the dingoes fish, and assisted in setting up a regular feeding program with the aboriginal people. The purpose was to attempt to keep the dingoes inland, and away from the guns of the Queensland government. The feeding attempt failed after the Queensland Government introduced heavy fines for anyone caught feeding the dingoes.



**Above; Starving Fraser Island dingoes...current photos 2010....we ask is this appropriate management of a World Heritage Area?**

In the Fraser Island community there was a strong feeling of disgust and anger, not only that the kill occurred, but in the cruel manner in which the dingoes were killed. A .22 rifle was used, and this is easily verified by looking at media photos of the shooting. A .22 calibre rifle is totally inappropriate for this type of killing. These rifles are used for rabbits, and should never have been used on a larger animal. According to many residents, at least 4 animals were wounded, and escaped into the bush. One wounded dingo later fell into Central Station Creek and bled to death. One absolutely harmless dog lived around a resort many, many miles away from the site of the recent fatality. "Socks" would occasionally jump in the pool for a swim, and then lie in the sun in front of the pub to dry out. Socks was shot but not killed, and returned to the resort 2 days later with a bullet hole in her face. QPWS had to come back and kill her, and were then ordered off the property and told never to come back. Tourists, staff, and guests loved this harmless animal, which was brutally killed by QPWS rangers on the orders of Premier Peter Beattie.



**Above, "Socks" the harmless Fraser Island dingo killed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, on the orders of then Premier Peter Beattie.**

Several locals told me they believe over 40 dingoes have been killed. We were also told that some QPWS rangers are in stress because of the massacre, and are being "counseled".

Many "solutions" have been tendered by many so-called experts, including tourists carrying stones to throw at the dingoes, or sticks to threaten them with. Some have suggested even more heavy fines for feeding dingoes, not understanding that these are not lions or tigers, they are dogs, and there are few people who will not feed a hungry dog. The bottom line is that these

animals are starving, and unless they are fed with a properly structured and authorised feeding program, they will continue to be a problem and another person may die. The Fraser Island dingoes are the last almost purebred dingoes left anywhere in the World...and they live in a World Heritage Area, supposed to be managed by the Federal Government. Their already slim genetic strength has been decimated, in an act of sheer revenge, to satisfy the bloodlust of a dictatorial Premier, who seemed at the time to have lost his marbles. Like most Australians I am saddened and sickened by the unwarranted massacre, and the current slow starvation, of the Fraser Island dingoes.

The Government then undertook a “risk management strategy” which was compiled by the same people, and the same agencies, which caused the dingo problem in the first place. We had little confidence in the outcome. The Government trotted out a few “experts” who know nothing about Fraser Island, but who sit in a city office making media statements to back up the Governments actions.

Any strategies developed are useless unless the fundamental issue is dealt with—the dogs are starving. 6 or 8 feeding stations inland away from the tourist areas, serviced with dry dog food each week or so, would solve the problem immediately. The dogs would initially argue for territory amongst themselves, but they would quickly get to know that food was available at those places if they were hungry, and if they wanted to hunt they would. Purpose-built hoppers, protected from rain, and a foot or so off the ground to prevent scavenging by bandicoots, (if there are any left) would solve the problem. Dry dog food is balanced, nutritious, and doesn't smell, or pose health risks. The hoppers should be placed near water. Further advantages are that the native dogs could be monitored at the sites, put to sleep with a dart gun and tagged if required. Contraceptives could be added to the food if necessary. The island doesn't support enough wildlife now to feed even a handful of dogs. Feeding stations would also reduce the impact of the dingoes on the few remaining native animals and birds. Those dogs which liked human company, and many do, would no longer be a threat to campers when they decided to visit. Obviously the whole process must be transparent. Other suggestions have been for aerial food drops to take place away from tourist areas.



### **Queensland Environment Minister Kate Jones claims she has never seen a starving dingo!**

Enforcement of rules banning campers from feeding dogs which visit camps should continue. However, even the heaviest of fines will not stop many people from feeding starving dingoes. Most people love dogs, many have had beautiful relationships with a dog at some time in their life. There are very few people who will not feed a starving dog. Heavy fines will not stop it, but seeing an obviously well fed dog will reduce the practice. We dispute statements that dingoes are naturally skinny. They are not. Dingoes in areas of heavy road kills, or in good hunting areas, are often in very good condition, as we have demonstrated in the photos above. In other states where dingoes can be kept as pets under permit, and properly fed, they are magnificent animals. Those people who argue the dingoes should be able to feed themselves from island wildlife have little idea of the paucity of island fauna.

In a recent conversation I had with an ex-QPWS ranger, he claimed there were less than 20 wallabies left on the Island. Bandicoot populations have crashed, as have the numbers of sand goannas. Nesting and migratory resting seabirds, many of which are supposed to be “protected” by International Agreements, are being eaten by the starving dingoes. If there were enough natural food there, the dingoes would not be starving now, and they are starving.

What is needed urgently is comprehensive, independent fauna studies across the whole of the Island, to determine just how much wildlife is left. Setting a few traps sporadically as the Government Rangers do now, is just not good enough. Such studies need to be undertaken at least every two years, with scat studies done in the other year. Otherwise there is no way of determining just how much wildlife is left....from our own observations, and visitors and local resident reports, we know there is not much.....



**Above; Migratory seabirds resting on the beach on Fraser Island.**

The Federal Government has an obligation under the World Heritage Area Act, to appropriately manage all WHA's. In spite of many community complaints and entreaties to the Feds, pleading with them to act on the Fraser Island dingo mistreatment, it has failed to do so. Many other species of wildlife have been grossly impacted by the failure of the Queensland government, and the Federal government, to manage the fauna adequately.

The Fraser Island dingo massacre has imposed a great shame on all Australians, and the Queensland government will never ever be able to live down this horrific crime against nature. We have asked the Federal Government many times to start managing the Fraser island World Heritage Area the way it should be managed...responsibly and sensitively as it should be under the WHA legislation, and in particular in relation to the Fraser Island dingoes, arguably the last purebred dingoes in the World.

I visit the Island frequently, and I believe the mismanagement of the dingoes will eventually be their demise, as the gene pool deteriorates under the misadministration of the Queensland government. Many Australians have been critical of the dingo mismanagement, and other Island mis-management issues, and many believe the World Heritage listing should be removed, as I do.

Sincerely, Pat

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