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 Facial Recognition Software has potential for Fraser Island Dingoes.

The revised Fraser Island Dingo Strategy (FIDCRMS) was released in July 2012. Recommendations are currently being implemented but details are not yet available to the public, although transparency was to be a main feature of the new strategy.

An issue still of concern is the ear-tagging of dingoes. Experts, such as Professor Bryden from the University of Sydney, agree that tags are detrimental to the health and well- being of the animals and, in many cases, cause permanent damage to the ear. Photos indicate a pattern over many years of animals with torn and deformed ears.

According to Right to Information (RTI) in Dec 2011 rangers noted that a number of dingoes had been tagged under 10k and under 6 months of age, this was despite the fact the government at the time stated only animals over 10k and 6 months of age were to be tagged. Management also gave approval for this tagging if it was considered for 'management purposes', this was clearly a breach of the code of conduct. There is evidence underweight tagging continues.

It has become more difficult in recent months to obtain RTI and the ear tag register no longer provides vital information, such as weight of animal and date of birth, this is of concern as there is no longer transparency or accountability.

Professor Brian Lovell of the University of Qld. an expert in Face Recognition Technology, recently applied this software in a study to identify individual dingoes on Fraser Island. The study demonstrated that the software was able to successfully match the correct animal 80% of the time. This technology has the potential to eliminate tagging and human interference of dingoes and, in the long term, would also be more economical than the capture/tag method.

Professor Lovell commented, 'We already have smart phone based human recognition available. If we had the funding and interest, we'd love to develop a smart phone app for dingoes so the public and tourists could also help with the population monitoring.'

The software is in early stages of development and has been self-funded by Professor Lovell and his team, considering the potential this technology has, we urge the government to support and assist funding to allow further research, as the benefits for our wildlife cannot be ignored.

For further information contact Prof. Brian Lovell at lovell@itee.uq.edu.au

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