



**Queensland Government Response to the**  
Independent expert panel Review of the  
Implementation Plan for the K'gari wongari  
(Fraser Island Dingo) Conservation and Risk  
Management Strategy



**Queensland**  
Government

## Introduction

In 2019, the Queensland Government announced an independent scientific expert panel (the panel) would be established to review the Implementation Plan for the Fraser Island (K'gari) Dingo Conservation and Risk Management Strategy (the Implementation Plan).

The review was announced following three serious dingo interactions in early 2019.

The panel was tasked with reviewing the effectiveness of management approaches in the Implementation Plan based on best available science and cultural insights, and identify ways to improve people safety on the island and protection of wongari<sup>1</sup>.

## The panel Final Report and Recommendations

Following a review of the management approaches in the Implementation Plan the panel has provided its findings to the Queensland Government. The panel report details effective actions being delivered and identifies opportunities to improve safe outcomes for people and protection of wongari.

## Queensland Government Response to the panel findings

The Queensland Government welcomes the final panel report and its recommendations. We thank the former Queensland Chief Scientist, Professor Paul Bertsch, and the panel members for their significant work to undertake this review and deliver the final report. The Queensland Government thanks all who participated in this review for their contribution.

The protection of people and wongari on K'gari has been a long-standing commitment by the Queensland Government. The Department of Environment and Science through Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Butchulla People have been actively working together to implement a range of risk intervention, education, compliance, research and monitoring programs.

The endorsement from the panel that the Implementation Plan remains comprehensive and effective, and the management approaches in the Implementation Plan are effectively being delivered, is great acknowledgement of the partnership work being undertaken by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Butchulla People.

It is understood that managing people remains the greatest challenge on K'gari. Some people are making choices, such as deliberately interacting and feeding wongari, which can have devastating consequences. Wongari that have become habituated and lost their natural fear of people, can trigger a serious negative interaction.

This demonstrates the need for a comprehensive management program as set out in the Implementation Plan. It ensures that a range of risk mitigation, education, collaboration, research and compliance actions are taken to help reduce the risk and keep both people and wongari safe.

In moving forward, the panel have recommended continued commitment in delivering the Implementation Plan and adopting additional opportunities to enhance the safety of people and protection of wongari.

The following sections detail the Queensland Government response to the key elements of the panel findings. Details of the response to each individual panel recommendation is provided in Appendix 1.

## Addressing risk mitigation findings

In partnership with Butchulla People the Queensland Government commits to the delivery of risk intervention actions that support people having a safe experience on K'gari and maintaining a healthy and sustainable population of wongari on K'gari. As part of a suite of actions we will work to:

- Establish additional fenced camping areas on the island such as the recently completed Cornwell's fenced camping area on the eastern side, noting the effectiveness of fencing in separating people and wongari and keeping people safe.
- Work with Butchulla People to deliver a communication strategy aimed at providing the community and stakeholders with a better understanding of the aversion collar trial.

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<sup>1</sup> Wongari is the Butchulla term for the wild dingoes of K'gari.

- Review the aversion collar trial to ensure their effectiveness in separating high risk wongari from people and changing their habituated behaviours.
- Investigate and trial different methods and technologies for deterring a possible negative wongari interaction.
- Continue to promote the importance of wongari interaction reporting by the public and analysing this data to help inform management response.
- Continue to deliver routine risk assessments and actions to support people safety such as warning signs, track and camping ground closures, enhanced monitoring and targeted education.
- Continue to deliver management strategies in response to high risk wongari.
- Continue to deliver wongari ear tagging programs to support monitoring and accurate identification of wongari in interaction reports.
- Implement additional no fish waste disposal areas to help prevent wongari familiarising people with food.

## Addressing communication and education findings

In partnership with Butchulla People the Queensland Government is committed to further enhancing the education and awareness programs that support the safety of people and wongari. Recently completed research on visitor behaviour, motivations, and feedback on wongari and safety measures, together with the panel findings, provides a platform to enhance the education program in delivering positive, targeted and effective safety messages. It also creates the platform for greater inclusion of cultural messaging on the values and significance of K'gari and wongari to the Butchulla People. In response to the panel findings and social research we will:

- Continue to deliver a range of education actions through social media, information on the Department of Environment and Science website, school holiday education campaigns, brochures, business cards, signs, and posters.
- Continue to deliver ranger camp site and visitor briefings, given the effectiveness of face-to-face engagement in promoting safety and increased data on wongari interactions.
- Promote accurate messages and research findings on the health of wongari, including that a stable and healthy population of wongari live on the island and a variety of natural food sources exist.
- Use a range of communication channels and approaches to effectively target the different visitor types (e.g. families, fishers, international tourists), including timing messages prior to arrival to support better uptake.
- Support greater promotion of cultural messages as part of building respect for the island and wongari, focusing on positive behaviours, and building emotional connection to encourage people to care and protect the wongari.
- Continue to promote key safety messages such as teaching the importance of keeping children close, not walking alone, securing food, reducing bush toileting and managing waste, proper disposal of fish waste, and not approaching or feeding wongari.
- Celebrate the success of management approaches through sharing the findings from risk intervention actions, research and monitoring, compliance programs and education and awareness.

## Addressing collaborative actions

The Queensland Government partnership with the Butchulla People is at the heart of delivering a range of people safety, wongari protection and park management initiatives. This includes delivering collaborative projects such as additional fenced areas, the aversion collar trial and enhanced education. The department will also provide further upskilling opportunities to support ongoing Butchulla involvement in wongari management and public education.

In partnership with the Butchulla People the Queensland Government will undertake further collaboration with commercial tourism operators, accommodation providers, island businesses, residents, visitors, and community and conservation island interest groups, to support the adoption, shared delivery and promotion of people and wongari safety initiatives. The goal being sharing and delivery of consistent and positive messages to a wider audience.

Face-to-face engagement has been demonstrated to be particularly effective in raising awareness of safety messages. The feasibility on the use of campground hosts, training and induction programs for tourism operators on the conservation and cultural values of wongari and safe behaviours, and the use of champions to promote key messages, will be investigated.

## Addressing research actions

The Queensland Government accepts the need for ongoing science and research to support and inform management decisions. To support the success of management programs the Queensland Government in partnership with the Butchulla People will work to:

- Identify and trial different methods for deterring wongari; separating people and wongari; and breaking the pathway to habituation.
- Deliver the research program on the genetic health and status of the wongari population.
- Support the adoption of social science research findings and ongoing inclusion of people behaviour in interaction records and management actions.
- Continue to identify and deliver research programs that support people safety and improves the understanding of wongari health.

## Addressing compliance findings

The Queensland Government has recognised the importance of strong compliance action that enhances the safety of people and wongari. Accordingly, in 2019 the government increased the fine for interfering with or feeding a wongari from \$391.65 to \$2,205.

The Queensland Government has adopted a consistent hard-line approach to people deliberately feeding wongari and has issued a number of penalties for such behaviour.

Consistent with the panel findings, we will continue to uphold this approach and deliver compliance programs and training that strengthen public stewardship and reporting, and on-ground compliance capabilities.

## Addressing evaluation and review findings

The Queensland Government is committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these management approaches. To support delivery of the panel findings we will undertake periodic assessments and evaluation of existing, expanded and new actions. Management approaches and evaluation will be based on the best available science and be informed by cultural, social and conservation considerations.

## Committing to the challenge

The Queensland Government acknowledges the success of the Implementation Plan and its delivery in keeping people and wongari safe comes down to commitment and resourcing. The current partnership with the Butchulla First Nations people is integral to this success.

The panel emphasised the importance of committing to the management challenge. We will continue to ensure management actions are adequately resourced and that we have the right skill sets, tools, technology, training and support to deliver.

## Appendix 1

Panel recommendation		Government response	Status
<b>Committing to the challenge</b>			
Strengthen partnership with the Butchulla People	Investigate and deliver actions for greater involvement of the Butchulla People in wongari management, including rangers, upskilling, and decision making	Supported	Ongoing. Co-operative arrangements underway with positions funded within Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) to enhance partnership and involvement in wongari management.
Resourcing	Undertake an internal assessment of existing on-ground actions to help determine which actions require more energy and focus and which require less	Supported	Assessment being conducted.
Resourcing	Ensure rangers are adequately resourced to deliver front-line actions such as engagement, monitoring and risk intervention	Supported	Ongoing. Government commits to ensuring current ranger levels and front-line activities including engagement, monitoring, risk intervention, and the essential budgets required to deliver these activities are maintained.
<b>Risk intervention</b>			
Fencing	Investigate, construct, monitor and maintain additional fenced areas in collaboration with the Butchulla People. For example, fence Orchid Beach township and additional campgrounds on the eastern beach as a key strategy to reducing risk	Supported	Four fenced camping areas established on eastern beach.  A project to fence the Orchid Beach township has commenced with \$2 million allocated to deliver.
	Ensure fenced areas are appropriately designed to support the recapture of any wongari that have managed to get inside	Supported	Implemented.
	Establish collaborative arrangements with the Butchulla People, Fraser Coast Regional Council, local residents, tourism operators, resorts and island businesses for delivering fencing and supporting infrastructure	Supported	Implemented and ongoing.
Interaction reporting	Improve the analysis of data from people and wongari interaction reports	Supported	Government will continue to improve record keeping and analysis.
	Promote the reporting wongari interactions amongst visitors and residents	Supported	Implemented and ongoing.

Panel recommendation		Government response	Status
	Include data on people's behaviour in interaction reports to enhance understanding of interactions and help inform future management action	Supported	Government commits to capturing available information to inform future management action.
	Regular reporting of interaction data, including sharing information with the Butchulla People	Supported	Implemented.
Risk assessments	Deliver actions in response to risk assessments such as warnings, closures, monitoring and targeted education	Supported	Implemented.
Routine closures	Deliver routine temporary closures of camping areas during low visitation times as part of risk reduction strategies	Supported	Implemented.
Ear tagging	Allow captured wongari less than 10kg to be ear tagged following assessment of their age, ear size and health	Supported	Ear tagging program established. Change to existing practice implemented in accordance with recommendation.
	Delivery of education messages and awareness on the importance and benefits of tagging for people and wongari safety	Supported	Ongoing. Additional messaging to be included as part of enhanced messaging
Geo-fencing/ aversion collars	Deliver an aversion collar trial (geospatial virtual fencing) as a targeted strategy for separating people and wongari	Supported	Trial to commence following necessary technological testing and consultation with Butchulla representatives.
	Roll-out the use of collars to high-risk wongari subject to the outcomes of the trial and taking into account cultural, ethical and management considerations	Supported	Contingent on trial outcomes.
Deterrents	People should be strongly encouraged to carry a walking stick, pole or something similar as a visual deterrent when walking in unfenced areas as part of risk reduction	Supported	Implemented. Current messaging promotes carrying a stick.
	Implement ways where people can easily access sticks including uptake by commercial tourism operators and encouraging visitors to pack a stick for use when out and about on K'gari	Supported	An initial small trial completed. Further trial planned in consultation with Butchulla representatives.
	While carrying a stick is encouraged people should be reminded that wongari should not be hurt or chased. Sticks are a deterrent only and penalties apply to any deliberate harm or harassment	Supported	In progress. To be incorporated within standard messaging and on specific relevant signage.

Panel recommendation		Government response	Status
	Investigate and trial other deterrents noting the importance of keeping things workable and practicable	Supported	Research trials are supported as needed and in collaboration with research institutions within the scope of current resourcing.
Waste from bush toileting	Limit bush toileting (through education or restrictions) as part of breaking the pathway to habituation and reducing the risk to people	Supported	In progress. Education messages to be enhanced.
	Greater promotion of the conservation and cultural values of wongari to K'gari as part of seeking a reduction in bush toileting and other poor behaviours	Supported	Planned as part of the co-operative arrangements and enhanced messaging.
Expansion of no fish waste areas	Expansion of 'no fish waste disposal' areas to help prevent wongari familiarisation with people and food sources	Supported	To be investigated.
	Promote the risks and potential consequences of poor fish waste disposal	Supported	Education messages to be enhanced.
Knowing what to do with a high-risk wongari	Retain euthanasia as a last resort management option for a wongari showing high-risk behaviour when all non-lethal options fail	Supported	Euthanasia will be retained as a last resort option to ensure duty of care is upheld to people and that future safety is not unacceptably compromised by any animals demonstrating dangerous behaviour.
	Develop and implement a co-generation strategy with the Butchulla People to establish management actions for dealing with high-risk wongari	Supported	Government commits to developing a co-generation strategy in consultation with the Butchulla people. Discussions with Butchulla representatives has commenced.
	The department and the Butchulla People to work together to seek support from other island interest groups to support enhanced people and wongari safety	Supported	Government commits to working with the Butchulla people to seek support from other island interest groups to support enhanced safety.
<b>Communication and education</b>			
Education	Prepare and implement a collaborative communication and education strategy that identifies target groups and utilises a range of channels	Supported	Communication and education messages to be enhanced, and the scope of a collaborative communication and education strategy will be investigated within the parameters of current resourcing.

Panel recommendation		Government response	Status
	The Butchulla People to deliver communication and education on the cultural value and significance of K'gari and wongari	Supported	QPWS will continue to work cooperatively with the Butchulla people to deliver communication and education on the cultural value and significance of K'gari and wongari.
	Support face-to-face ranger engagement as an effective means of raising awareness and promotion of safe behaviour	Supported	Implemented.
Collaboration and co-generation	Develop a strategy for collaboration—identify priority groups, their interest in collaborating and how to best engage and involve them	Supported	Government commits to working with the Butchulla people to seek support from other island interest groups to support enhanced safety.
	The department and the Butchulla People to co-generate ideas and actions to support people and wongari safety	Supported	Government commits to working with the Butchulla people to co-generate ideas and actions to support enhanced safety.
	The department and the Butchulla People to collaborate further and co-generate ideas and actions with other island interest groups as part of building shared responsibility and commitment for people and wongari safety	Supported	Government commits to working with the Butchulla people to seek support from other island interest groups to support enhanced safety.
	Implement a range of collaborative actions to support people and wongari safety such as campground hosts, commercial tourism operator training and accreditation, and use of champions	Supported	Government commits to investigating and scoping a range of collaborative actions to support people and wongari safety such as campground hosts, commercial tourism operator training and accreditation, and use of champions within current resourcing.
<b>Research</b>			
Wongari population and health	Deliver research on the health and wellbeing of the wongari	Supported	Implemented with current collaborative research projects underway and commitment to ongoing delivery of targeted research projects.
Promotion	Promotion of findings about wongari population and health	Supported	Communication and education messages to be enhanced, and findings about population and health will be investigated.



Panel recommendation		Government response	Status
Necropsy	Use necropsy as a means of providing valuable insight on the health of wongari that have died from natural or human intervention including data about their weight, diet, cause of death	Supported	Implemented.
Social science	Conduct further social science research on behaviours and motivations of people and the effectiveness of communication actions	Supported	Social science related to behaviours and improvements to communications is ongoing and will be investigated further within the parameters of current resourcing.
<b>Compliance</b>			
Ongoing compliance action	Deliver compliance programs as an important and effective tool in supporting risk management	Supported	Implemented.
Upskilling	Deliver further training to upskill rangers and explore further opportunities for Butchulla employees	Supported	Implemented - Collaborative training opportunities will be further investigated.
Compliance team	Investigate using an off-island compliance team to visit and undertake a range of enforcement actions to support education and risk intervention actions delivered by rangers on K'gari	Supported	QPWS undertakes joint compliance with Queensland Police Service and is supported by the QPWS Compliance Optimisation Team for strategic directions.
<b>Evaluation and review</b>			
Ongoing evaluation and review	Undertake routine evaluation and review to assess the effectiveness of actions and reporting	Supported	Implemented.
Greater transparency	Deliver greater transparency on management actions and responses such as a summary or infographic on internal annual reports, to convey and celebrate the work being delivered to keep people and wongari safe	Supported	QPWS commits to ongoing internal annual reports on management actions related to the Fraser Island Dingo Conservation and Risk Management Strategy Implementation Plan, and will investigate further opportunities.