Fraser Island Defenders Organization

FIDO — The Watchdog of Fraser Island

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Aim: To ensure the wisest us of Fraser Island's natural resources

26th April, 2006

Committee Secretary
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas.

Further to my evidence in the Committee's Brisbane hearing on 21st April I would like to provide some supplementary data in response to some of the questions.

Value of Tourism on Fraser Island: I attach two copies of the report on the economic contribution of Fraser Island and the Daintree (Cape Tribulation) World Heritage areas of the national economy. The study was only possible because I was able to obtain a grant from the Goldman Environmental Foundation in San Francisco to enable a Cairns based corporate consultant to undertake an independent evaluation of the worth of these areas. We believe that if Kleinhardt were as familiar with all of the flow on effects of Fraser Island as they undoubtedly are with the Cape Tribulation area they may have valued Fraser Island tourism even higher than the $277M they derived. The visitation figures and duration of stays for both destinations are surprisingly similar.

Trends in visitation to Fraser Island: I also enclose two tables showing the rate of visitation to Fraser Island and the recent downwards trend in visitor numbers. One table, recently published in MOONBI 112 provides some explanation of a dramatic drop in visitation particularly from free and independent travelers (25% in two years). The other is a table prepared showing the longer term trends in Fraser Island visitation numbers which had steadily increased for over a decade since World Heritage listing before abruptly beginning to decline in 2003.

Proportions of expenditure on Visitor management and Natural Resource Management: During the hearing I was also asked some questions about the amount of money spent on recreation management on Fraser Island and that spent on natural resource management. I have located an analysis of the breakdown in expenditure on Fraser Island into its various components. These figures were published in MOONBI 98 in 2000. The figures are now somewhat old but we haven't been able to obtain a similar breakdown since. It shows that about eight times as much is spent on visitor management as is spent on natural resource management. The comparisons with cultural resource management are even greater. However when the Commonwealth was providing a more generous

amount of project targeted funding under the NHT 1 arrangements virtually all of the projects funded were to assist visitor management.

Commonwealth role in natural resource management on Fraser Island: As I said during the Committee's Brisbane hearings FIDO, believes that the Commonwealth funding needs to be better directed towards protecting the World Heritage values which would imply that much more would be provided for natural resource management. FIDO also strongly supports the Commonwealth Government playing a much more active role in protecting World Heritage values which are in the sites inscribed for their natural values primarily influence by the natural resource management which includes management of fire, weeds, feral animals, erosion and quarantine.

Fraser Island as a Cinderella of federal support for World Heritage: In MOONBI 98 (November 2000) there is also another page detailing and commenting on the Federal allocations to World Heritage areas. Another table updating the allocations appears in MOONBI 99. Copies of all three pages are attached.

I also attach a table made available from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service showing that almost all of the money contributed by the Commonwealth Government has been spent on recreation management rather than natural resource management.

The Commonwealth role in natural resource management: If the Commonwealth had been attentive to its responsibilities to protect the identified World Heritage values of Fraser Island that environmentally devastating 40 km firebreak which the committee saw during its visit should not have occurred. The firebreak is contributing to degrading Fraser Island's World Heritage values. I attach some photos taken from three different sites to show the scale of devastation which will now isolate many smaller species into islands because they won't venture across such a wide opening in the forest. Unfortunately another 100 plus kilometres of similar firebreaks are now proposed. This will divide Fraser Island into a number of small islands for some species.

This organization is very keen to view the submissions to the Committee from Gary Smith, General Manager of Tourism and Leisure Corporation, and David Hay, who is both operations manager for Tourism and Leisure Corporation and chair of the Community Advisory Committee. Both could have great relevance to Fraser Island. Could you please when these will be available in the public domain.

Yours sincerely

John Sinclair,
Honorary Project Officer.

Attachments:

1. Report "Tourism & Recreation Values of the Daintree and Fraser Island"
2. Two pages of MOONBI 91
3. Two pages from MOONBI 112
4. Table showing Fraser Island Visitor Number Trends
5. QPWS Table showing breakdown of Commonwealth funding on Fraser Island
6. Photo page of firebreak from Hook Point to Ungowa