

Queensland Legislative Assembly	
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## Norma's Story..

**My time on Fraser Island  
1966 to 2003...**



*Happy Birthday Norma.*

I was always looking at the trees and large hills across the way from Hervey Bay when I was a girl living at the Bay and I wanted to go there and explore.

My Father said to me, "what do you want for your 11<sup>th</sup> birthday"? I said that a trip to Fraser Island would be great. He came home from bowls that afternoon and said 'right, we are going to Fraser Island tomorrow so get your things ready.'

We went along with some other people in the launch "Jenny J" and landed at Yidney Creek, climbed aboard a Model T Ford with large wheels on the back and 7 forward and 2 reverse gears and travelled through the most beautiful rainforest to the eastern beach. We had a wonderful day and I said to my Father, when I marry I will buy land and build some flats, take tours to show the visitors what a wonderful place this Fraser Island is. Of course that didn't happen for another 20 years!

The Forestry had just opened 10 blocks of land in Happy Valley, so my husband Geoff and I sold our butchering business in Hervey Bay bought a block of land overlooking the magnificent ocean, built those units naming them "Fraser Sands Holiday Units". We ran tours for our visitors and flew them in from the Mooni Jal airstrip at Scarness Hervey Bay. We took Tourists to see the beautiful wild flowers, rainforest, headwaters of the western creeks with their wonderful ferns, told them all about the animals, the turtles in the lakes and Scar trees made by the Aborigines for their carrier baskets and shelters, all about the tree species, the magnificent sand blows, fish species and how to catch those evasive sand worms.

We cared for injured animals and birds when the rangers went on 4 days off. Geoff my husband, became a Forestry Ranger, a National Park Ranger, an Aboriginal and Islander Warden and a Coast Watcher. We had plenty of books to purchase and plenty to study, but we wanted more, so we saw the need for a complex further north to cater for the visitors. We approached the Lands Department and they were keen, so we drew up some plans for that development. We won the tender as we had the best set of plans. We sold our units at Happy Valley and proceeded with the

new venture. The area was 10 hectares of undulating land with beautiful shade trees, 400 metres back from the beach, we selectively cleared the area.

The complex consisted of 50 camping sites, 8 self contained units, 2 tent sites for 16 persons for two nights and three day tours, 2 large covered 54 seat bus day tour areas for lunch, and an all you want grocery shop, containing fishing gear, gas gear and camping supplies, souvenirs, takeaway hot food, meat, fish, bottle shop, petrol supplies and gas refills and ice, plus Gold phone service. The complex took 2 years to build and it opened for the Christmas holidays 1985. The area was controlled by the Forestry Department and QPWS, two great departments to work with.



*Birthday Celebrations In  
Hervey Bay..  
Feb..2014.*

All was going fine, then the Island became World Heritage in 1992. That is when the world became aware that Fraser existed and that it would guarantee that World Heritage Listing would bring tourists, and it did, backpackers in their droves, drink driving, noise till the early hours of the morning, just being clowns in general, washing up in the wash basins or under any tap that they could find causing an influx of flies. No infrastructure in place by the QPWS for extra toilet facilities within the National Park.

The garbage became a great problem as there were not enough bins on the beach and garbage was being left beside the bins and the dingoes were scavenging as their food source had been cut due to removal of cattle, the slow removal of the brumbies, the closure of some open ground dumps and the burying of the fish offal. This was taking up our Workman's time to clean up around the bins when our garbage was dumped.

No Police, no Ambulance, no Doctors only the helicopter from the Sunshine Coast which took two hours to attend an emergency. Sid Melksham and Angela Burger from Eurong, Graham and Wendy Coutts-Smith from Happy Valley and Geoff and myself had to handle all these problems and we all did it very well for all those years!

Then disaster struck at Cathedral Beach on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1998, in the early hours of that morning Geoff suffered a massive heart attack and was choppered out 2 hours

later to Maryborough Hospital and passed away later that afternoon. I managed to struggle on for a further 6 years with the help of my very loyal staff and my son and his daughter Natalie helping all through the school holidays each year.

I could see that QPWS were not going to improve the infrastructure for the backpackers in the top end of the Island and when the opportunity arose and the buyer came along I sold Cathedral Beach Resort and Camping Park, even though it was my life. But never mind, things happen that one does not have any control over. It is comforting to know that I can still go back whenever I wish.

Today, 11 years after leaving the Island there is still no camp ground for the backpackers to control the excreta and the poor dingoes are still exposed to this. It is very sad. I should write a book in great detail on the happenings on Fraser Island but it would be 10cm thick and very expensive. Thought I would write a few lines to tell you what made me go to the Island and what I did while there, 37 years a resident on the Island and to think I thought I could make a difference!

Norma Hannant.



*The gang celebrating  
Norma's birthday...*

*Word from the President of SFID and those of us who work with Norma on a weekly basis, your knowledge of the Island is exceptional and as a Tour Guide you are second to none! You have made a difference!!*

