



Hon Vicky Darling MP
Member for Sandgate



Minister for Environment

Ref: CTS 20605/11

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 22 November 2011 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1814-11 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition draws to the attention of the House the current management practices and policies, including the management of the dingo, are not meeting the needs and expectations of the community on Fraser Island.

The Petitioners therefore request the House to change the way the Government manages Fraser Island and to require that all future decisions in relation to the management of Fraser Island have the supporting agreement of the Butchulla People.

Fraser Island is managed under legislation including the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. The key principle for management of national parks is contained in section 17 of the Act which states "A national park is to be managed to provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's cultural resources and values". The dingo is classed as native wildlife under this Act and hence is protected on the national park estate.

Following the tragic death of a young boy attacked by dingoes on Fraser Island in April 2001, the Queensland Government released a strategy for the management of dingoes on the Island. Core objectives of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (updated 2006) include:

- conserving a sustainable wild dingo population on the Island;
- reducing the risk posed to humans by dingoes on Fraser Island to an acceptable level (low); and
- providing visitors with an opportunity to view dingoes in an environment as near as possible to their natural state.

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The Strategy has been reviewed in 2006 and independently audited twice in 2003 and again in 2009. The audits were conducted by Dr Laurie Corbett, who is a world-renowned expert on dingoes. Dr Corbett has confirmed that dingoes are prevalent and widely distributed across Fraser Island and not in danger of imminent extinction. His 2009 audit concluded that the Strategy was still working well to achieve the twin goals of protecting public safety and conserving a sustainable population of wild dingoes.

In 2009, the Queensland Government announced additional research into dingo numbers and, more importantly, the capacity of the dingo population to self regulate according to natural prey abundance. A dingo working group was established, incorporating internal and external experts, to inform the appropriate and ethical development of the research.

A Dingo Population Study is currently underway to gain better research and understanding about the population size and habits. The results of stage 1 were analysed by Griffith University. They estimated the dingo population on Fraser Island to be up to 200 animals, depending on the seasons and breeding cycle. This is consistent with the original estimate made by Dr Corbett and scientifically refutes the claims that the dingo population is 'on the verge of extinction'.

The department takes visitor education very seriously, and continues to review its communications strategies to ensure the approach remains contemporary and best practice. It is focused on educating visitors and the broader public about appropriate behaviour when on Fraser Island.

More detailed information on the range of issues associated with managing the interactions between humans and dingoes on Fraser Island is available on the department's website at www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks/fraser/dingo-management.html.

There are three Fraser Island World Heritage Area Advisory Committees (Indigenous, Community and Scientific) comprising a total of 30 members. They provide advice on matters relating to the protection, conservation, presentation and management of the Fraser Island World Heritage Area from the viewpoint of the community, including dingo management.

The Indigenous Advisory Committee consists of one representative from each of the eight Butchulla family groups. Each of the three Advisory Committees meet three times per year, and once a year there is a joint meeting of all Advisory Committees. The Management Committee meets twice a year to discuss current issues or actions such as dingo management on Fraser Island.

As is evident above, the Government undertakes extensive community consultation, including with the Traditional Owners on the management of the Fraser Island World Heritage Area – and is the only World Heritage Area across Australia to have three separate Advisory Committees. The Traditional Owners are well represented through these Advisory Committees and on the specific topic of dingo management, have been consulted and provided input to the dingo management framework, audit of the system and past and current dingo research. In fact, at the last Fraser Island World Heritage Area Joint Meeting held on 2 to 3 July 2011, all of the Advisory Committees, including the Indigenous Advisory Committee unanimously supported the current dingo research being undertaken on the Island by the department in collaboration with various universities.

Further, the Fraser Island Association which represents residents on the island has recently publicly supported the strategy. It has felt the need to do this as a result of

continual misinformation and inaccurate claims being made in the media by certain individuals.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Ross Belcher, Regional Manager (Great Sandy) of the Department of Environment and Resource Management on telephone 4121 1855.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vicky Darling". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vicky Darling MP
Minister for Environment