

**Submission on the Effectiveness of Threatened Species and Ecological Communities'  
Protection in Australia**

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**To:-**

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**From:-**

**Marie-Louise Sarjeant & Chris Sarjeant.**

**Mrs. Sonia Hutchinson**

**John Marsh, Dingo Keeper.**

**Maxine Jacobsen**

Date: - 23/11/12

I am writing to make a submission on the welfare of the Fraser Island dingoes.

Legal Status:

*Until 2004 the Fraser Island dingo was classified as on the **Red List of Threatened Species** and now assessed as "Vulnerable" with Fraser Island having the rarity of the purest dingoes in Australia.*

**A. The Effectiveness of Threatened Species' Protection on Fraser Island,**

The current research in to the role of the dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) as a participating member of Australian ecosystem shows that as the apex predator it plays a vital role in sustaining a balance of species that is viable in the long term and critical to the conservation of Australia's biodiversity (de Blas 2009, Johnson et al 2006, O'Neill 2002, Purcell 2010, Rose 2011, Wallach et al 2008).

At present, on Fraser Island the fate of the dingo is under threat from the policy of prioritizing tourism over the welfare of the dingo, its habitat and the rights of the Butchulla people to practice their cultural relation with it (Alexander 2009, Parkhurst, 2010).

Consequently the current management of the Fraser Island dingo under the Fraser Island dingo Management Strategy and its likely reviewed version, is and will be inappropriate to achieve its long term protection unless the priorities are changed and the wellbeing of the dingo, the Butchulla people's cultural rights and the ecological values basic to the World Heritage Listed National Park's status of the Island are given priority over the tourist industry and the use of the Island as a people's playground.

**B. Timeless risk:**

The Indigenous community from the Island the Butchulla, the Elders, and the local Gubbi Gubbi Elder, Dr. Eve Fesl, are describing the ongoing culling of these dingoes as reckless.

The abuse of Aboriginal cultural rights associated with the ongoing mismanagement of dingoes on Fraser Island, Qld. **the Elders called upon the Queensland Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Andrew Powell, to intervene to ensure a genuinely independent review of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS).** Dr Fesl stated: *'The dingo has suffered in the same way as my people have'.....Butchulla Elder Aunty Marie states that "The continued, reckless culling of dingoes on Fraser Island, including the "camp dingoes" at K'Gari Camp, represents a continued attack on the rights and customs of the Butchulla people. Dispossess the dingoes and you dispossess us" Aunty Marie said. "Butchulla people on Fraser Island avoid being seen with their dingoes for fear the QPWS will destroy them; for that reason alone"*

**Dr. Eve Fesl further states..***The confiscation of Indigenous land was the common factor behind these twin oppressions. Because of The important place of the dingo in Indigenous ritual and custom, the failure of Governments to protect the dingo represents a continued disregard for Indigenous Identity and culture.'* **Reference: media release NDPRP ..." Indigenous Elders Outrage". 16/11/12.**

### **C. Management:**

Dr. Eve Fesl felt the promise of the Newman LNP government to undertake an independent Review of the FIDMS has been very welcome, the dingo management policy inherited From the former Bligh Labor government having been an ongoing disgrace, it is now Disappointing to find that the policy review does not meet any basic standard of Genuine independence.'

*Saying 'It beggars belief that scientists engaged on behalf of the Queensland government to Advise and take part in the dingo management review process are well known in Scientific circles for being sceptical about the merits of dingo conservation, and that One expert engaged to address a public forum as part of the review had been Acknowledged and thanked by the former Labor Minister for the Environment, Kate Jones, for his input into the current, failed policy.'* and asks for *'the Minister can find the political courage, He still has the opportunity to intervene To ensure a genuinely independent dingo management policy review"*

A company called **Ecosure** won the tender for an "independent "peer review. The review comes out on Dec 22, and the final newly revised FIDMS in February. There are concerns, however, of the inclusion of previous employees from the last Gov. FIDMS with continuing the practices that have depleted the numbers of these dingoes to such a level that it has been reported that siblings have been seen by residents mating with sibling. This is evident of a species in crisis.

Prior to the election, the LNP promised an independent review of the FIDMS. This is not happening. While Ecosure appears to be an independent organisation, they are being influenced by those who either helped prepare the current Plan or are responsible for the current dingo management.

There really is no independent scientific data to determine how many sustainable dingoes are left for the future of our Fraser Island dingoes. Repeatedly stated over and over again by the locals is their anger at this mismanagement.

Regarding the anger of the Elders, there should be a complete moratorium on killing dingoes until the Ecosure FIDMS and peer review is released in Feb.2013. Dingoes may be unnecessarily destroyed by then.

The Indigenous Elders, locals and Stakeholders attending a recent open workshop arranged by Ecosure in Maryborough on the 5th.Oct.2012, , the predominant conclusion is the complete failure of the past and present FDIMS & QPWS to correctly care for these dingoes if the present FIDMS follow the previous management and with the inclusion of QPWS and these two scientists from the last FIDMS their future looks bleak. There should be a complete moratorium on all culling until an independent, free from government and politicians, a study as to " truthful "numbers and breeding pairs. Not from QPWS's records.

#### **D. History:**

These Fraser Island rare dingoes are at risks of extinction still being on the “Red List” and there is an urgent need to classify them as endangered officially.

The Government’s and Queensland Parks and Wildlife rangers’ failure to recognize the special relationship that exists between the Butchulla People and the Fraser Island’s dingoes with consequent dingo management’s breaches of the Butchulla people’s rights and customs (Fraser Coast Chronicle 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2012). Fraser Island is a World Heritage National Park and the dingoes are supposed to be protected.

<http://www.frasercoastchronicle.com.au/news/another-butchulla-elder-has-added-her-voice-to-the/1626389/#c447205>

#### **E. Threats:**

There has been little evidence of any protection, with the continued, contentious experiments committed on the animals such as:-

**Hazing** ...catapulting marble or clay pellets or rat shot at any animal adult or puppy seen near tourists or fishermen on the beaches, incapacitating the dingoes from hunting or scavenging fish and coconuts their natural food or washed up fish, mammals’ or turtles.

**Ear-tagging**... negligent ear tagging as has been done recently on a puppy that was 3 months old and under aged. In Yellow stone National park they are not ear-tagged until 12 months

A dingo needs its ears to hunt and a drooping infected ear will enable it to hunt and it will either seek food from tourists or starve, giving it the bad mark of “habituating” caused by the very rangers who tag them and then coded for destruction.

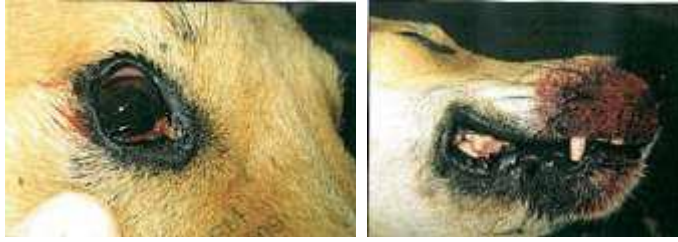
**Trapping**.... Enticing with whale oil into a leg trap, that causes injury and terror (used to implement the ear tagging and last year a nefarious contentious collaring, using heavy unsuitable collars more suited for bears and cougars). When animals are easily darted in countries such as Africa it is beyond belief that these animals are subjected to such terrors and pain. Pups separated from mothers suffer anguish and when released can often be killed by the pack as they smell of humans.

\*Dingo Misunderstandings of dingo interaction with humans re:-dingo attack is being:- ‘Attraction ⇒Habituation⇒Interaction ⇒Aggression’. This claim is used to support the false assumption that feeding dingoes causes aggression. This is an example of the lack of understanding of this animal.

From an **RTI necropsy report**..... a dingo was incorrectly trapped with a pole noose and suffered a horrendous death.

The DERM vet on the report commented;

**“The circumstances of this case indicate a need for a critical review of the capture and restraint procedures for dingoes”**



This is archaic and ignorant animal welfare practices and is incredible that these rangers are not well trained or educated in dingo behaviour and cause so much unnecessary suffering when they are supposed to be the custodians of these animals

**ALARMING RESULTS FROM RECENT RTI APPLICATIONS SHOW GROSS ANIMAL CRUELTY: VALABARB:**

- Grave concern has been expressed by members of the public and some veterinarians about the use of Valabarb as a means of euthanasing (destroying) dingoes on Fraser Island.
- It is highly recommended by all vets that Zoletil (anaesthetic) be administered prior to using valabarb, as it causes an excruciatingly painful death for the animal. However, Recent RTI information shows that, of the approximately 30 animals destroyed with valabarb, 9 did not receive Zoletil prior to destruction. .
- In one case an animal was injected 4 times in the intracardiac region (heart) before it eventually died.
- Permission to use valabarb is usually only granted to veterinary surgeons, but can be used by wildlife carers and government officials.

However, there are strict guidelines for use by wildlife carers. Each instance of use must be fully documented.

The recent media release of Ross Belcher's, QPWS area manager of Fraser Island dingoes, relentless obsessive, hunting of one little juvenile male dingo one of the K'Gari Butchulla camp dingo's, called "Inky" is deplorable. His 2 brothers from the K'Gari camp were also destroyed by QPWS.

**Inky** was shot but escaped with a bullet wound in his neck and an infected ear.



***Inky with infected ear oct/nov.2012***

Area manager Ross Belcher's states, denying that "any Fraser Island dingo was killed unnecessarily" and he further denied the rangers "did not respect the Butchulla people" has completely ignored the

Statuary declarations signed by the Butchulla Elders in protest at their dingoes being killed, and is effectively disrespectful of the Butchulla people.

"Inky" is now a timid, frightened animal now fearful of the rangers and as has been stated with Statuary declarations from the Butchulla poses no threat.

He is part of the new generation males. All healthy juveniles and a puppy, necessary for the future breeding stock now at risk

The puppy now, from his inability to hunt from this negligent, underage ear tagging, will seek food from tourists, or bear a risk of starvation, obtaining a bad mark against him for the "crime" of "Habituating" from the rangers and caused by these very QPWS rangers who tagged him.



***Under aged ear tagged pup at Eurong Nov. 2012***

Also the fact that the rangers damaging the ear of a 3 month old pup from negligent ear tagging of this age pup at Eurong, has given serious concerns to the Aboriginal community and Elders and locals here on the Coast.

The dingo crime of a code C "Habituating" .....

Which is ..." *a dingo was lying down 20 metres from a fisherman!!* Other "crimes" the dingo commits', They are; 'loitering' at visitor sites, stealing or 'soliciting' food, following people closely, and generally associating with human presence". Then the escalation to a code E which is a code for destruction is often on misunderstanding of dingo behaviours.

QPWS continually commit errors on dingo care and welfare that shocks and outrages other dingo sanctuaries around Australia and animals welfare organisations around the world.

The LNP had originally promised a look to a food drop for the dingoes which has now not been repeated.

#### **F. Development:**

Scientist and dingo experts have voiced their concerns at these animals now being put at risk of extinction. Representatives from the NDPRP (**National Dingo Preservation & Recovery Program**) Dr. Ernest Healy, Dr. Ian Gunn, Vet, Arian Wallach and Adam O'Neill, [dingo scientist](#),

Have all written to push for changes helping to enable these rare unique pure breed dingoes to continue to exist. The need for a better education and understanding of these unique dingoes is imperative. Educating the rangers to train with known respected dingo care networks or sanctuaries and educate the tourists on understanding dingo behaviours and postures and the risk times; such as mating, puppy season and juveniles.

The fear campaign that QPWS perpetrates is exacerbating the risks.

A recent quote by well respected Dingo Keeper to QPWS Area Manager...."What Ross Belcher and others need to remember is that the Dingoes on FI have never been 'truly wild'. They have always had a co-dependency relationship with people. The indigenous people used them to help hunt (and as a food source in lean times), and when Forestry were managing the island, the Dingoes helped with the removal of food scraps, thus reducing the strain on the garbage. So the Fraser Island Dingoes have ALWAYS interacted with people. Another important point to remember is that a Dingoes habitat/territory plays a major role in their behaviours. In short, mainland tropical types behave slightly differently to alpine types, who behave differently to the desert types, etc Fraser Island Dingoes because of their close proximity to, and interaction with, people naturally will have different behaviours again to all the other types."

**Dr. Jane Goodall PhD, DBE ,British primatologist, ethnologist, anthropologist, and UN Messenger of Peace**, has written to support the dingoes of Fraser Island and the very fact that this issue is gaining international attention should be a priority to address.

Money can't replace a rare animal. With further development in the pipeline encroaching more and more on the dingoes natural habitat and possibly an unwillingness to "spend" more money on preserving these dingoes, it looks abysmal for the future sustainability of these rare marginalized rare dingoes..

Many locals are pessimistically bemoaning that the dingoes will be gone in the next decade or less. This is a terrible view.

There is no where on Fraser Island that a dingo can go without encountering, smelling or coming across a human. Therefore the terminology used by QPWS to destroy a dingo for a "crime"( assuming the dingo know the rules.) of "**habituating**" is a nonsense with this small Island, & of course the dingo has no choice but to commit the crime of "habituating".!

For decades now people's outrage and anger at the cruelty perpetrated on the F.I. Dingoes has been ignored, and the fight to protect these Dingoes, has done little to improve the chances of them being there for future generations to wonder at and to enjoy we are stealing their heritage..

Because it's a small Island and a well known food source for the dingoes was removed, in an act, that itself was violent and cruel, the brumbies, a once food source for the dingoes now on the Island food has been decimated, leaving many dingoes starving.

A fact denied by QPWS but a fact witnessed by residents and the Butchulla on the Island and many visitors and tourists, who voiced their distress at seeing these pitiful starving animals. That they are even denied accessing the washed up fish and fishermen's waste as was done for decades before QPWS has increased this factor.



## **G. Conclusion**

It is evident that an effective protection of the Fraser Island dingo cannot be achieved unless the current priorities, management strategy and tourist management are changed.

We therefore submit that welfare conclusions cannot be drawn from the official Fraser Island Management Strategy's data as they conflict with the observations by scientist, dingo experts around Australian animal welfare organisations,

Such as:

The AWPC (Australian wildlife Protection Council) WPAA (Wild Protection Association of Australia Inc) and the SFID (Save Fraser Island Dingoes) WLPA (World League for the Protection of Animals), the Aspinnall Foundation, United Kingdom, the Goodall Institute Australia, among many groups, which show that these dingoes are at risk of extinction.

Consequently, in order to prevent the escalation of the Fraser Island dingoes to extinction, there is an urgent need now, to classify them as endangered as well as ensuring a world's best management practices with transparency and open to periodical reviews and field checks on the numbers and wellbeing of the dingoes.

Yours sincerely

Marie-Louise Sarjeant.

*Footnote: "On the 23 of November, a harmless Dingo by the name of Inky was killed. The Butchulla Elders wrote with one voice pleading for his life to be spared. Locals and interstate Australians alike wrote many letters to no avail.*

#### **Reference:-**

1. Alexander, N. 2009 – "Concerns heightening for Fraser Island Dingoes"; Ecos 151, Oct.-Nov., 2009, pp 18-19
2. De Blas, A. 2009 – "The Dingo's role revitalized"; Ecos 147, Feb.-March, 2009, pp12,13;
3. Johnson, Ch. N., Isaac, J. L. and Fisher, D. O. 2007 – "Rarity of top predator triggers continent-wide collapse of mammal prey: dingoes and marsupials in Australia"; Proceedings the Royal Society, B, Biological Science (2007) 274, 341-348;
4. O'Neill, A. 2002 – "Living with the Dingo; Envirobook ;
5. Parkhurst, J. 2010 "Vanishing Icon: the Fraser Island Dingo"; Grey Trush Publishing;
6. Purcell, B. 2010 "Dingo"; CSIRO Publishing;
7. Rose, D. B. 2011 "Wild Dog Dreaming, Love and Extinction"; University of Virginia Press;
8. Wallach, A. and O'Neill, A. 2008 – "Persistence of Endangered Species: Is the Dingo the Key?" Report for DEH Wildlife Conservation Fund;

# Media release

Embargoed until 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012

**Auntie Marie will be available for further comment and interview ...**

## ***Prominent Indigenous leader calls upon QLD Environment and Indigenous Affairs Ministers to defend Indigenous Relationship to Fraser Island Dingoes***

Today, , Auntie Marie, a prominent Elder of the Butchulla People, the traditional inhabitants of Fraser Island, called upon the Queensland Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Andrew Powel and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Glen Elmes, to immediately intervene to prevent the unnecessary destruction of Indigenous camp dogs (dingoes) on Fraser Island.

Auntie Marie called upon the Ministers to respect the cultural significance of the dingo for Indigenous Australians and to recognise the historical link between the persecution of the dingo since European arrival and the oppression of Indigenous Australians.

‘The continued, reckless culling of dingoes on Fraser Island, including the ‘camp dogs’ at the K’ Gari Camp, represents a continued attack on the rights and customs of the Butchulla people. Dispossess the dingoes and you dispossess us.’ Auntie Marie said.

She added:

‘Because of the important place of the dingo in Indigenous ritual and custom, the ongoing failure of the Queensland government to protect the dingo on Fraser Island, and to protect the special relationship between the dingo and Indigenous people, is an attack on us. Butchulla people on Fraser Island avoid being seen with their dingoes for fear the QPWS will destroy them for that reason alone. QPWS mismanagement of the Fraser Island dingoes is offensive to the Butchulla culture and identity.’

‘I simply do not accept that the camp dogs recently killed by QPWS on Fraser Island were dangerous. QPWS is whipping up a frenzy of fear about these poor dingoes, when they were not a threat to anyone.’



# Media Release, - Dr Eve Fesl (OA)

November 15<sup>th</sup> 2012

Embargoed until Tuesday November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## ***Prominent Indigenous Elder calls upon Queensland Government to make genuine effort to protect the Fraser Island dingo***

Today, prominent Indigenous elder of the Gubbi Gubbi people, Dr Eve Fesl (Order of Australia), called upon the Queensland Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Andrew Powell, to intervene to ensure a genuinely independent review of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS).

Dr Fesl, who has owned dingoes herself, points to the cultural significance of the dingo for Indigenous Australians, including the traditional owners of Fraser Island, and to the historical link between the persecution of the dingo since European arrival and the oppression of Indigenous Australians.

Dr Fesl stated:

*'The dingo has suffered in the same way as my people have. As colonial settlers turned on Indigenous people, they also turned on the dingo; the confiscation of Indigenous land was the common factor behind these twin oppressions. Because of the important place of the dingo in Indigenous ritual and custom, the failure of governments to protect the dingo represents a continued disregard for Indigenous identity and culture.'*

Regarding the current review of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy, Dr Fesl added:

*'Although the promise of the Newman LNP government to undertake an independent review of the FIDMS has been very welcome, the dingo management policy inherited from the former Bligh Labor government having been an ongoing disgrace, it is now disappointing to find that the policy review does not meet any basic standard of genuine independence.'*

*'It beggars belief that scientists engaged on behalf of the Queensland government to advise and take part in the dingo management review process are well known in scientific circles for being sceptical about the merits of dingo conservation, and that one expert engaged to address a public forum as part of the review had been acknowledged and thanked by the former Labor Minister for the Environment, Kate Jones, for his input into the current, failed policy.'*

Dr Fesl stated that this disingenuous approach to the FIDMS review points to ongoing insensitivity and disregard for Indigenous culture, including the relationship of Indigenous people with the dingo. This is further highlighted by the fact that no Indigenous representative has been appointed to the Steering Committee that has oversight over the policy review.

*'If the Queensland government does not act decisively now, to ensure a comprehensive and genuine review of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy, and include Indigenous representation, it will be too late for the dingo on Fraser Island. Under the current policy, the poor dingo has been brutalised and demonised by the authorities responsible for its well-being.'*

*'If the Minister can find the political courage, he still has the opportunity to intervene to ensure a genuinely independent dingo management policy review. The Queensland Government still has the opportunity, not only to ensure responsible management of the Fraser Island dingo, but to contribute to the correction of the historical injustice towards Indigenous people. Not only would responsible, culturally-sensitive dingo management on Fraser Island be a step forward in meeting government responsibilities in the preservation of the World Heritage values of Fraser Island, but would represent a positive step in improving relations with Indigenous Australians.'*

*'Further, a conscientious approach to preservation of the dingo would send a positive signal that Queensland is ready to accept its international responsibility in the protection of native species as part of our global heritage'.*

.....

Dr Fesl was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1988 for her work with the ethnic community and in the maintenance of Aboriginal languages. Eve was the first Indigenous Australian to receive a PhD from an Australian university, which she gained for her research into language policy and its implementation. Further, she was the first Aboriginal woman appointed as the Director of the Aboriginal Research Centre at Monash University. She has been a member of the Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, the National Museum of Australia's Aboriginal Advisory Committee, the Aboriginal Literature Board and the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council. Among Eve's numerous sporting achievements, she was selected for the Australian Olympic Training Squad for the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne.



## the Jane Goodall Institute

April 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I am deeply saddened to hear about the plight of the dingoes on Australia's Fraser Island. I understand these dingoes are a rare and valuable species proven with DNA unique to the entire world and the last remaining population of purebred dingoes.

Conservationists, scientists and Island stake holders are now concerned that these valuable pure breed dingoes are at risk of extinction. I also understand that the current approach to dingo management on Fraser Island has created enormous suffering as a result of a government-driven management program compiled without proper research from scientists. I am disappointed to hear that the local Aboriginal people are not represented and that there has been no input from the settled residents of the Island who well know 'their' dingoes and had a peaceful co-existence with them before.

I have been told that the dingoes of Fraser Island are revered by the Butchulla Aboriginal people who regard them as one of their spirit protector animals in a place they call K'Gari (meaning paradise), yet it is now a sad dark place where the dingoes struggle to coexist with the vast numbers of tourists and development.

It is with deep sadness that I have heard of a cruel death of a dingo caught with a pole noose. She was, I understand, strangled and suffocated, and I can well imagine her fear and terror. This was for an experimental collaring programme. I have also heard there are verified reports of siblings mating, indicating a species in crisis and under duress, with over culling of adult and juvenile dingoes, causing a breakdown in the dingoes' social structure.

April, I am told, is the breeding season for these dingoes, when animals are more active, more territorial and more likely to come into conflict with visitors. There is an urgent need now, for a successful breeding season, to help the continuation of these unique iconic animals.

As an unofficial ambassador for endangered animals all over the world, I am frequently asked to write letters in support of conservation programmes; I am writing now on behalf of these endangered dingoes of Queensland, Australia. I certainly agree, whole heartedly, that there should be no further trapping for ear tagging or any other reason (save for veterinary assistance to an individual), and no culling. I would hope that all concerned would agree there should be a requirement for the most stringent commitment to the welfare of individuals in any kind of research. And I urgently beg everyone involved to ensure that all possible measures are taken to protect these dingoes so that there may be a thriving and sustainable population of the last pure breed dingoes in Australia – the last in the world.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Goodall, PhD, DBE  
Founder – the Jane Goodall Institute  
& UN Messenger of Peace

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