



Hon Kate Jones MP
Member for Ashgrove

CTS 12444/09
13385/09

08 DEC 2009



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Climate Change
and Sustainability**

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letters of 27 October 2009 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1314-09 and 11 November 2009 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1338-09 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petitions request that the House is aware of the diminishing number of dingoes on Fraser Island, which it attributes to a variety of circumstances.

Following the tragic death of a young boy in April 2001, the Government released a comprehensive strategy for the management of dingoes on Fraser Island. The objectives of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (updated in 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 (low) level; and to provide visitors with an opportunity to view dingoes in an environment as near as possible to their natural state. A key principle of the Strategy is that dingoes are regarded as wild, native animals and should be interfered with as little as possible.

A recent independent audit of Fraser Island dingo management by internationally recognised dingo expert Dr Laurie Corbett, has confirmed the Queensland Government's Strategy is working.

The Strategy has been prepared with expert input, is internationally recognised and implemented by a team led by well-qualified scientists who are dingo experts in their own right. Collectively, the team has the most direct and consistent experience in managing dingoes on Fraser Island.

As well as Dr Corbett other contributors included Dr Lee Allen (pre-eminent dingo research zoologist), the Fraser Island World Heritage Area Scientific Advisory Committee and many other key Fraser Island stakeholders including Fraser Island Defenders Organisation, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and the National Parks Association.

The Department of Environment and Resource Management is fully cognisant of its obligations under Queensland's *Nature Conservation Act 1992* to protect the Fraser Island dingo as a native species and the department is committed to conserving the Island's dingo population.

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The department has an equally compelling duty of care to help protect members of the public from aggressive dingo attacks. This Government's number one priority is to ensure public safety. It is for this reason that a dingo identified as dangerous through their behaviour will be humanely destroyed. Departmental policy does not presently include any proposals for the culling of dingoes outside of the dangerous category.

I have stated publicly on many occasions that I do not support the proposal to treat dingoes as pets and introduce dingo feeding stations. Feeding dingoes would artificially increase numbers on the Island, interfere with natural population dynamics and increase the frequency of dingo-human interactions. Ensuring that dingoes do not become habituated by humans is more important than ever.

I am particularly concerned that the Liberal National Party Opposition has been advocating Dingo feeding stations as the solution to this management issue.

On 1 September 2009, I released the audit of the Strategy carried out by Dr Corbett. The report is publicly available and can be found on the department's website at www.derm.qld.gov.au.

Of the 91 Strategy actions, Dr Corbett recommended that 88 of those continue and of those 20 require some modification.

His suggested modifications include:

- integration of research projects;
- regular monitoring of dingo diet and prey abundance;
- more research on the dingo population including adult dingoes;
- increasing dingo awareness programs particularly during holiday periods;
- further peer reviews of research;
- a focused effort on education in isolated sites;
- renewed cooperation with council to fence waste transfer facilities; and
- improving disposal of fish offal.

In particular, Dr Corbett has endorsed the actions to reduce risk through better education of visitors, training of rangers and erecting dingo fencing in strategic locations. The department is currently analysing the recommendations.

Prior to a problem dingo being destroyed, officers of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service obtain as much information as possible from witnesses before any actions are taken. The Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy outlines in detail processes and procedures to be followed during investigation of dingo incidents. The humane destruction of a dangerous dingo is a measure of last resort and requires in all instances corroborating documentation, including witness and victim statements as well as the positive identification of the dingo involved.

When planning controlled burns, the QPWS always takes into account the requirements of native wildlife to help ensure that the most appropriate and sensitive regimes are followed.

In managing fires on Queensland's protected area estate, the QPWS places the highest priority on protecting human life, followed by protecting infrastructure and environmental values. The timing of back burning operations is closely negotiated with Fire Authorities and the Bureau of Meteorology. Controlled burns must occur in the winter months and in all instances before the annual fire season when weather conditions are such that any burn could become an out of control fire.

Controlled mosaic burns provide wildlife with the habitat necessary to survive a wildfire later in the season.

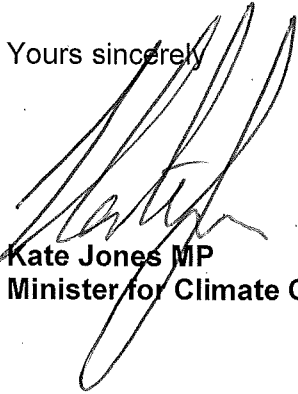
Tagging of dingoes for identification purposes is again an established wildlife management method. Tags not only identify a particular dingo in the event of an incident but also contribute much needed dingo management data, including population dynamics. The QPWS is not aware of any evidence that ear-tagging impairs the health or survival prospects of Fraser Island dingoes.

I have listened to the concerns about the dingo population. An independent audit in 2003 determined that dingoes remain prevalent and widely distributed across the Island and that they are not in danger of imminent extinction. While data collected over the past decade suggests that the Fraser Island dingo population naturally fluctuates between 100 and 200, I am nevertheless keen to accelerate further research to be more certain of the numbers.

Accordingly, the department is proactively working with the University of Queensland, Griffith University and Biosecurity Queensland, so that accurate figures on dingo numbers can be provided. The survey will provide a better understanding not only of the total numbers, but also of other factors such as dingo dispersal across the Island, the total number of packs and the age and composition of those packs.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. If any further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact Michael Dart of my office on telephone 3239 0844.

Yours sincerely



Kate Jones MP
Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability