



# FINIA

THE NATURAL INTEGRITY ALLIANCE FOR K'GARI

## Newsletter

*Sustaining the natural and cultural integrity of K'gari together*      **November 2025**

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Participating in the BMRG weed workshop on K'gari in December 2005, the plan was to identify issues, agree on goals and then start overcoming tenure barriers to reduce the threat of weeds. It was a powerful workshop. We discovered the passion that people have for this very special place and the tremendous lengths that people (and their organisations) will go to protect and conserve K'gari; not just for themselves and their families, but for future generations. It is that same passion that has led to the success of FINIA. 20 years on, we are still going strong!

*The Editor*

## Celebrating 20 years of FINIA – A Review



In December 2005, a group of organisations with a common interest in addressing weeds on K'gari met to discuss how to improve collaboration and prioritise activities. Facilitated by the Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG), participants included the State Government (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM), Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO), National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ), the Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management (CRC Weeds), Hervey Bay and Maryborough City Councils, Lower Mary River Land and Catchment Care Group (LMRLCCG), Sandy Cape Lighthouse Conservation Association (SCLCA) and the Traditional Owners of K'gari, the Butchulla people.

After two days checking sites including the culturally significant Bogimbah Mission and townships, it became clear that issues relating to land tenure were affecting the ability to address all natural resource management issues in the World Heritage Area. By the end of the workshop, the participants formed the Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance (FINIA) to address issues that were threatening the future sustainability of the island's natural environment.

FINIA boasts a broad and growing membership, with 21 organisations currently partners in the alliance.

### FINIA's Timeline

**2005** In December 2005, FINIA forms after a 2-day site visit and workshop to develop a Weed Management Action Plan for K'gari. LMRLCCG commence voluntary monitoring of nesting loggerhead and green



turtles performing nest relocation and protection where necessary and continue this program annually until the 2023/24 nesting season.



*Photos from the first FINIA Weed Workshop in 2005 – Above, garden escapees being encouraged to 'go bush' at Eurong. Middle: Marie Wilkinson with Alan Key, George Haddock and John Sinclair (note the 'safety shoes' in the kitchen!) and Don Bradley. Below, Ivan Thrash leading the convoy to see sisal hemp management at the sisal hemp at the Bogimbah Mission site (Photos: BMRG)*

- 2006 Hervey Bay City Council and FIDO, in cooperation with Maryborough City Council and QPWS, produce the *Weed control on Fraser Island - Guidelines for residents of Happy Valley & Orchid Beach* booklet. FIDO continue their volunteer weed management programs at Happy Valley and Eurong alongside the community, addressing the issue of garden escapees in Unallocated State Lands and the National Park. This incredible effort, a key component of FINIA and FIDO's activities, is sustained for the next 20 years. FIDO undertakes cane toad trapping after a 'recent' incursion of cane toads on K'gari.
- 2007 Funded by the BMRG, timber shelters with information boards are installed at Happy Valley and Eurong to increase community member awareness about weed management risk and 'plant me instead' alternative planting. A volunteer weed management program commences at Sandy Cape in

partnership with SCLCA, LMRCCG, and QPWS. Weed data is collected to indicate the scale of the issue and monitor the program's success over the next 15+ years.

- 2008 Jason Harvey commences a 2-year project funded by the BMRG to develop a tenure-blind Weed Management Plan for K'gari. The University of the Sunshine Coast hosts Jason's position with Jason taking on the informal role of FINIA Coordinator.
- 2009 FINIA's meetings continue in an ad hoc basis twice a year with meetings generally held in Gympie. FIDO weeding efforts continue in Happy Valley and Eurong. Work continues in the development of the tenure-blind management plan. Given the significance of the Great Sandy Strait as a Ramsar Wetland, Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG) conduct regular shorebird surveys every 1-2 years. The first surveys of the region were completed by Peter Driscoll (1993), with QWSG conducting surveys since February 1995. In October, after surveying 51 roost sites, volunteers record 22 migratory and 9 resident species, and a total count of 26,017 shorebirds.
- 2010 FINIA meetings move to a new format with quarterly meetings held in Maryborough to increase communication, coordination, and collaboration between partners. The group formalises, developing a vision, purpose, and terms of reference, but agree to remain as an informal, non-incorporated alliance so that all partners have the same status within the Alliance.
- 2011 The tenure-blind Landscape Weed Management Plan for Fraser Island is launched. QPWS support the work of FINIA, providing secretariat support through Alana Kippers, Lou Coles, Ian Webb, and Amy Sauer before funding ceases in 2014.
- 2012 FINIA gets their own logo and starts publishing a quarterly newsletter - producing over 50 issues to date. In January, QWSG conducts an aerial survey of 48 roost sites with a total count of 34,501 shorebirds. FIDO's Eurong weed working bees are supported by work at the Eurong nursery with Michael Lowe. John Sinclair calls for the quarantine on K'gari with 179 species of weeds (now over 200 species) identified within the National Park. This figure does not include freehold aliens and has increased from only 51 species of weeds named in the 1991 World Heritage nomination document.
- 2013 FINIA launches its website [www.finia.org.au](http://www.finia.org.au) providing partners and supporters across the world access to project information. FINIA, in partnership with students from the University of the Sunshine Coast, develop a visual presentation highlighting values e.g., shorebirds, threats e.g., introduced weeds and visitor behaviour e.g. dingo-safe to protect the island. The presentation plays on the Fraser Venture barge. FIDO, BMRG, Fraser Coast Regional Council (FCRC) and FINIA publish the Fraser Island Native Garden Planting Guide. In December, QWSG conduct their shorebird survey across 54 roost sites, but only record 21,404 shorebirds. Concerns are being raised about habitat loss, particularly at staging points for migratory waders along the East Asian Australasian Flyway. Myrtle rust is first identified on K'gari.
- 2014 Butchulla Native Title of K'gari's mainland is determined and held by Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (BAC) on behalf of the Butchulla People. Highly toxic and invasive crab eye creeper (*Abrus precatorius subsp. africanus*) is identified at Happy Valley infesting ~40Ha and extending up into the canopy. QPWS launch a Friends of Parks program with Conservation Volunteers Australia and ECOllaboration joining FINIA. The *Recognising and Recording K'gari's Cultural Heritage* project is delivered on K'gari led by the World Heritage Indigenous Advisory Committee and QPWS Butchulla Rangers. Using ground penetrating radar, the project locates three cemetery sites with ancestral remains at Bogimbah and goes on to win the Queensland Indigenous Landcare Award.
- 2015 FINIA celebrates its 10th anniversary. Rain gauges are installed by FIDO at Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora), Central Station, and Lake Coomboo as part of their sediment monitoring program. Later that year FIDO also installs the first of its real time rain monitoring gauges at Happy Valley. Led by Don and Lesley Bradley in conjunction with the University of Sydney, FINIA delivers a Bufotoxin trial to help manage cane toads on K'gari. Pandanus are treated with Confidor at Kingfisher Bay to control Jamella leafhopper, later that year the predatory wasp (*Aphanomerus sp.*) is introduced to K'gari as a biocontrol to help check Jamella numbers.



- 2016 FINIA shares a video case study of our activities and partners and marks its 10th anniversary planting two pandanus trees at Dilli Village. FINIA continues to grow with fifteen partner organisations. FIDO and Fraser Island Association launch a program supporting landholders to plant native plants propagated from seed collected and grown on the island. FIDO hosts a 9-person Green Army team for 6 months. FIDO funds a PhD scholarship at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) to investigate the environmental damage caused by vehicle traffic and develop sustainable transport solutions for K'gari. QPWS deploy five listening stations in K'gari's swamp/heaths to assess the presence/absence of the elusive Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*). At the end of the year, FIDO hosts the first K'gari BioBlitz - *Beach to Boomanjin and Birrabeen*.
- 2017 The State Library of Queensland nominates FINIA's website as part of the PANDORA archive "to capture the essence of the Queensland story to be preserved for both current and future generations". FINIA's website is archived every six months and is fully searchable via TROVE. Fraser Island's National Park is renamed K'gari. FIDO continue their work, installing a second online weather station at Eurong. USC launches its Fraser Island (K'gari) Repository for important materials relating to the island. QPWS commence the development of a Valued-based Management Plan for K'gari.
- 2018 K'gari celebrates 25 years of World Heritage, inscribed as Australia's tenth property on the World Heritage list in 1992. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex (Harry and Meghan) visit K'gari to unveil a plaque dedicating the forests of K'gari to the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy. The BAC's Butchulla Land and Sea Ranger team launches. Monitoring of myrtle rust continues with the suggestion that the fungus could devastate key Myrtaceae communities on K'gari within a decade, notably Melaleuca swamps and rainforest pioneer taxa. Waste management (including compostables) on K'gari becomes an increasing focus for FIDO and FINIA. FIDO hosts their first 'Great Plant Giveaway' at Eurong. Fox detection dogs fail to detect any foxes on K'gari during a 2-week survey, although cats, cane toads and pigs are detected. USC launches its K'gari App. By April 2018, FINIA's website has received a total of 18,303 hits from a total of 105 countries.
- 2019 Butchulla Native Title of K'gari's foreshores and coastal waters are determined (and held by Butchulla Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC on behalf of the Butchulla People). FINIA advocates for an increased focus on environmental biosecurity as a big issue for high conservation and protected areas. FCRC launch their draft Fraser Coast Waste Strategy 2019-29. Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers undertake Biosecurity Training with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (now DPI). FIDO's K'gari nursery project is awarded a Queensland Citizen Science grant to identify best practices in native plant propagation for ecosystem regeneration. A Master Plan for Central Station is developed by QPWS in conjunction with the BAC. The Master Plan's delivery will be staged over many years, with the first task stabilising and restoring historic buildings on site. FIDO's Orchid Beach and Kingfisher Bay weather stations come online.
- 2020 COVID-19 impacts Australia with K'gari closed to visitors on 25 March until 31 May. Only essential travel is permitted for residents and essential workers. Butterflies boom in March and early April after drought breaking rains, with thousands of blue tiger butterfly, *Tirumala hamata* (subfamily *Danianae*) migrating north. The Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers (BLSR) are trained in water quality monitoring by USC in a collaborative exercise with Prof Cathy Yule and assisting students. FINIA launches their *Future Pest* project supported by the Australian Government's Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer through the University of Melbourne's Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis, developing tools and strategies for minimising the risks of new priority pests, weeds, and pathogens on K'gari. Red Ash undertake an independent ecological study of weed management in Happy Valley on behalf of Happy Valley Community Association (HVCA) highlighting the area most at risk from Abrus and Easter cassia. QPWS provide wongari safety sticks for island walkers. In late November, K'gari again closes to visitors as K'gari experiences a massive wildfire between 14 October to 8 December. The closure remains in place until 15 December, after rains finally halt the wildfire which burns approximately 87,000 Ha (>50%) of the island.
- 2021 The alliance changes our name to FINIA – the Natural Integrity Alliance for K'gari in support of the Butchulla people and recognising the island's original name of K'gari. FINIA participates in the K'gari Bushfire Review undertaken by the Inspector-General Emergency Management (IGEM), Alistair

Dawson APM, QPWS, BAC and partners to commence monitoring of K'gari's ecological values for recovery and impacts of the bushfire. The USC K'gari World Heritage Area Discovery Centre opens at Kingfisher Bay Resort. The K'gari Bushfire Review proposes that a set of guiding principles providing a unified response to World Heritage-listed sites in Queensland be included in the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan and reflected in the Queensland Bushfire Plan. In July, the World Heritage Committee (UNESCO) endorse the renaming of the World Heritage property as K'gari (Fraser Island). Cultural burns are reintroduced with a traditional burn of the K'gari camp led by Butchulla Land and Sea Ranger, Blayde Foley. BAC commence a 3-year *Mur'rindum (Black-breasted button quail) Conservation project* (funded by a Queensland Community Sustainability Action Grant) to detect the presence of the birds on Butchulla country and address threats such as bushfires, predation, and access management.

- 2022 K'gari celebrates 30 years of World Heritage. Bushfire recovery is reported across all nine REs sampled, except coastal *Casuarina equisetifolia subsp. incana* woodlands and *Banksia integrifolia* woodlands on the frontal beach ridges and high dunes, which is a major concern. Large areas of the island are surveyed, with myrtle rust detected in Melaleuca wetlands, heath environments, wet sclerophyll forests, rainforests and vegetation surrounding some lakes. The most significant impacts are recorded in areas recovering from the 2019 and 2020 bushfires. Fish and frog surveys are conducted by the BAC, BMRG, Griffith University and MRCCC with Platys (an invasive aquarium fish) identified on K'gari for the first time in Bogimbah and Poyungan creeks, on the island's west coast. FINIA and FIDO are asked to assist with post-fire recovery leading to the FIDO *K'gari Coastal Fore dune Rehabilitation and Pandanus projects*. The BAC commences its 2-year *Butchulla Fire Management and Heritage Conservation project*. Fraser Coast Council launches a *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* for K'gari. The FINIA *Future Pest* project is completed with the tool identified as a national template for environmental biosecurity of high conservation areas. A flood in SEQ in February leads to a massive clean-up operation on K'gari by QPWS, BAC, 4WD QLD and tourism operators such as K'gari Adventures. Climate change predictions identify that the frequency of intense storm-flood events is likely to increase. The Department of Environment and Science (now DETSI) and Butchulla community commence the *K'gari Climate Adaptation project*. Aboriginal Freehold title to more than 22Ha of land on K'gari is granted to the BAC. Formal consultation commences on renaming the island to its Butchulla name of K'gari under the *Place Names Act 1994*.
- 2023 On 7 June 2023, the world's largest sand island, formerly known as Fraser Island, officially reclaims her name of K'gari after more than 6,000 submissions are received with ~70% supportive of restoring the island's Butchulla name. The Butchulla fire management project continues with training, cultural heritage surveys and fire mitigation works in preparation for planned burns. Red Ash releases its second independent ecological study of weed management in Happy Valley on behalf of HVCA. The report identifies significant reductions of both Abrus and Easter Cassia and natural regeneration of native species throughout the treated area. Dangerous dingo (Wongari) activity on K'gari associated with appropriate visitor behaviour results in the euthanasia of the animals involved. The BAC and QPWS increase their K'gari Dingo-Safe/Wongari-Wise efforts and messaging, particularly during peak visitation periods. A cooperative DNA study between QPWS, BAC, University of Southern Queensland and University of Cape Town, determines that K'gari's dingo population is sustainable, but that genetic health monitoring should continue for detect morphological signs or physical abnormalities associated with inbreeding. The BAC's *Mur'rindum (Black-breasted button-quail) conservation project* ends with several conservation initiatives undertaken including a cultural burn at Dilli Village (to reduce bushfire risk and protect habitat), weed management and pig control activities in the Inskip Recreational Area. FINIA update their Terms of Reference to include issues threatening the future sustainability of K'gari's natural and cultural values, systems, and processes.
- 2024 The Butchulla Working Group launches a Butchulla Climate Change Response Plan for K'gari. Building on the Climate Change project, and funded by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, the BAC undertake a desk-top review of existing reports and literature to identify over 220 values for their Butchulla Water Stories project and undertake training in Seagrass Watch and the Wetland Condition Assessment Tool (WetCAT) to monitor K'gari's significant wetlands. Griffith University ecologist, Dr Luke Carpenter Bundhoo identifies the Endangered Australian brook lamprey (*Mordacia praecox*) on K'gari. FIDO's K'gari online weather station network covering Happy Valley, Eurong, Orchid Beach

and Kingfisher Bay upgrades to 4G. Sealink report the highly invasive fish, tilapia, at Kingfisher Bay Resort. FIDO's Zela Bissett explores turning K'gari's weeds into paper to fund management activities. The BAC commences an 18-month project to develop a collaborative K'gari Biosecurity Strategy (funded through an Australian Heritage Grant) to prevent future invasive weeds, pests and pathogens and increase the BAC's capacity to monitor and respond to invasive species. On 28 October, the Australian Government gazettes a name change from Fraser Island to K'gari for the National Heritage place name.

- 2025 In March, Cyclone Alfred leaves more marine debris in his wake. K'gari Adventures remove 527Kg of rubbish followed by 8,355 kg of waste across 114 km of K'gari's coastline removed by 826 volunteers from 24 affiliated 4WD clubs during the 4WD Queensland annual K'gari Cleanup. Continuing the theme of biosecurity, the BAC, DPI and CSIRO undertake a project to identify which pests may be hitchhiking to K'gari on vehicles. Alice the Phytophthora sniffer dog indicates that over 50% of vehicles are positive for the fungal pathogen. The Biosecurity Strategy's development continues with a 2-day BlueSheet workshop held on K'gari. Delivered by the BMRG, with BAC and QPWS (funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust), Indigenous and Conventional Scientific Approaches to Fire and Water Management on K'gari, a new groundwater management project, commences. A second project, led by the BAC, BMRG, CSIRO, the University of Adelaide, and DETSI will investigate the hidden lifelines of K'gari's unique freshwater systems. Using a suite of techniques—from stable isotope analysis and sediment coring to lake bathymetry and water quality sampling—the team is unlocking critical knowledge about the island's water sources, their age, and vulnerability. Finally, following a request by the Australian Government, UNESCO's World Heritage committee adopts K'gari as the name for the World Heritage property. At the time of this newsletter, FINIA website had published 478 articles that have been viewed 116,415 times by 65,648 visitors from 186 countries from around the world. In December, FINIA celebrates 20 years of collaboration.

Part of our timeline, over the last 20 years FINIA acknowledges the sad loss of the following founding members and thank them and their families for their service:

George Haddock OAM, National Parks Association of Queensland (March 2008)

Auntie Marie Wilkinson, Butchulla (March 2016)

Dr John Sinclair AO, FIDO (February 2019)

Col Zemek, Woocoo and Fraser Coast Councils (July 2024)

Don Bradley, LMRLCCG and SCLCA (December 2024).

We mark the passing of these, along with committee members and key volunteers including Marion Anderson, John Bristow, Susie Pickin, and Maree Prior.

Your legacy is our continuing effort on K'gari to uphold FINIA's vision to protect K'gari's natural and cultural integrity, ecological assets and unique beauty through collaborative management, community education and targeted rehabilitation works. We thank you all for your service.

## From Fraser Coast to K'gari: A Tribute to FINIA's Legacy

It's been a few years since I last took the barge to K'gari or joined a FINIA meeting, but the energy and purpose of those gatherings still resonate. FINIA has always been more than a partnership—it's a movement built on collaboration, shared knowledge, and a deep commitment to protecting one of Australia's most iconic landscapes.

I joined the FINIA journey around 2008–09, just after its formation. At the time, Hervey Bay Council was transitioning into the Fraser Coast Regional Council, and I stepped in as the Biosecurity Officer focused on invasive species management. Working alongside Tony Van Kampen, Chris McCarthy, and later Colin Zemek, I had the privilege of contributing to a range of initiatives that reflected FINIA's core mission: safeguarding K'gari's natural integrity.



*FCRC staff managing Easter Cassia in 2010 (Photo: FCRC)*

One of our earliest collaborative efforts was the Bitou Bush Surveillance Program, conducted with QPWS and Biosecurity Queensland. These twice-yearly surveys were more than just fieldwork—they were a testament to the power of coordinated action. Mapping township invasive plants, supporting the *Island Weed Management Plan* led by Jason Harvey and QPWS, and prioritising species for control were all part of a broader strategy to restore ecological balance.

Other memorable projects included:

- The Jamella Pandanus initiative to protect native Pandanus from dieback
- Trial cane toad trapping at Waddy Point
- The Fraser Island Garden Guide, promoting endemic alternatives for landscaping.



Left: Bitou Bush survey 2011 with QPWS, BQ and FCRC, Centre: Emu parade on the hunt for bitou, Right: Bitou bush with FCRC Matt Clarke south of Eurong (photos: Juliet Musgrave and Fraser Coast Council)

The Fraser Coast Biosecurity team played a vital role in township pest plant management and the spirited “emu parades” to hunt Bitou Bush and I love the photo of QPWS and Council members trekking the dunes. I also found a photo of Matt Clarke crouched beside a sprawling Bitou south of Eurong—one of many moments that captured the dedication of our team, which over the years included Craig Hartz, Terry Horne, Shane Kelly, Dan Novak (now with QPWS), Tina Ravenau, Rod Buchanan and Andrew Hatch.

FINIA’s strength lies in its adaptability. While the early focus was on invasive plants, the scope has broadened to include fauna, habitat restoration, and community education. New faces have joined, but the shared purpose remains: to protect K’gari’s unique biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Though I couldn’t locate the photo of Col, John Sinclair, and the rest of us setting up the Eurong roundabout garden, the memory stands as a symbol of what FINIA represents—hands-on collaboration, respect for Country, and a vision for a thriving future.

To all past and present FINIA participants, thank you. Your efforts have shaped a legacy that future generations will inherit with pride. May K’gari continue to inspire and flourish under our collective care.

*Article contributed by Juliet Musgrave*

## IUCN Conservation Outlook Report Released for K’gari



Every three years, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) undertakes an independent evaluation of the conservation outlook all natural World Heritage properties. Given COVID-19, there was a slight delay in the latest round, with the latest reports released in October 2025.

A copy of the IUCN Conservation Outlook for K’gari can be downloaded [here](#).

On the surface, the picture painted of K’gari is one of continuing health with same overall score of ‘Good with some concerns’ that the property achieved in 2020. A score that means that while the situation is generally satisfactory it has a few specific issues that need attention.

Herein lies the issue, that despite consecutive reports (2014, 2017, 2020, and now 2025) highlighting the need to address threats including climate change, over-tourism and biosecurity, that insufficient resources have been applied to addressing these issues on K’gari.



It is not hard to identify K’gari’s threats, which continued to be classified as ‘high’. However, the following threats have escalated from high to **‘very high’** levels in the latest report.

- Fire and fire management
- Recreational activities (Overtourism)
- Invasive non-native, alien species
- Changes in temperature regimes changes in precipitation and hydrological regime.

Reading further, we find for the first time that the condition of K’gari’s World Heritage values continues to be of low concern, the trend is for the first time now **‘deteriorating’**, informed by a deteriorating trend for ‘unique flora and fauna demonstrating ongoing succession, speciation and radiation.’ In plain English, K’gari’s unique and globally significant combination of plants and animals are suffering.

While the assessment of K’gari’s protection and management continued to be ‘mostly effective’, three areas have declined from the 2020 report from a ‘mostly effective’ to ‘some concern’ rating. These were:

1. Tourism and visitation management
2. Monitoring, and
3. Research.

The effectiveness of management systems and governance in addressing threats originating from outside the site, e.g., Climate Change, biosecurity concerns, significant population growth, residential development and an increase in tourism and support industries in the Great Sandy Region, has also declined from ‘some concern’ to a **‘serious concern’** rating.

What does this mean for K’gari? In a national context, the property’s conservation outlook is rated as better than Kakadu National Park, the Wet Tropics of Queensland, Gondwana Rainforests of Australia and Greater Blue Mountains, all of which are now considered by IUCN to be of ‘significant concern’ with the Great Barrier Reef of ‘critical’ concern.

However, while K’gari has been spared a worsening conservation outlook, the deteriorating trend does not bode well for future conservation outlook assessments should K’gari’s land managers fail to address threats or improve K’gari’s protection and management regimes moving forward. This includes releasing and implementing the *K’gari (World Heritage Area) Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Change Adaptation Plan* developed by the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation and the Department of Environment and Science between 2022-24.

Since 2020, the Conservation Outlook has worsened for four of Australia’s 16 natural World Heritage properties – Ningaloo, Shark Bay, Purnululu National Park, and the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites. With a greater focus and improved resourcing for protection and management, we could prevent this fate for K’gari in the future.

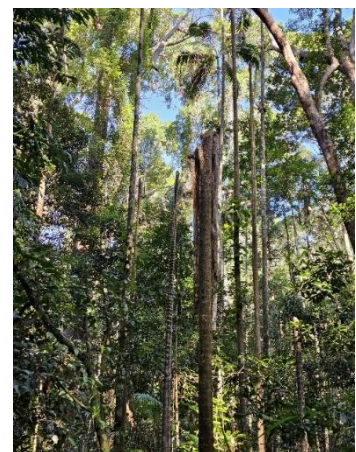
IUCN has spoken, the time to act is now.

*Article contributed by Sue Sargent, Chair - FINIA*

## Building Knowledge and Biosecurity Capacity for K’gari

In February, a suspicious sight of piccabeen palm dieback behind Happy Valley was reported by Peter Shooter, a team leader with the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO). The rainforest palms appeared to be dying and rotting along areas spanning tens of metres, showing overall symptoms of dieback. Investigations point to the fungal pathogen *Phytophthora*, but this is yet to be confirmed.

Dieback can occur naturally in plant communities. The cause of this symptom could be water stress, nutrient deficiency, or infection, among other factors, although humans can influence or accelerate its spread.



*Piccabeen palm dieback near Happy Valley (Photo: Peter Shooter, FIDO)*





BAC Rangers and DPI's Geoff Pegg investigating root rot in piccabeen palms (Photo: Seth Henaway, BAC)

The Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation's (BAC) Rangers conducted a Biosecurity Bioblitz—a type of field assessment—on the eastern side of K'gari. The piccabeen palms were inspected alongside Tracey Steinrucken, Tim Vance, and Cody Murray from CSIRO, and Geoff Pegg from the DPI. These collaborations provided multiple perspectives on the palms and their implications for the island.

From the field surveys, root samples are being cultured in laboratories at the EcoSciences Precinct in Brisbane to test for *Phytophthora*. We are now waiting on DNA sequencing results to confirm which species it may be. However, there are still a few more steps involved to confirm whether this pathogen is truly responsible. Plans are underway to bring *Phytophthora*-trained sniffer dogs onto the island next year to gather more information.

The introduction and spread of this invasive pathogen highlight the need for greater collaboration in biosecurity, encouraging all members of the community to play their part. BAC hopes to see the community-led K'gari Biosecurity Strategy launched by the end of this year.

*Article contributed by Seth Henaway, Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation*

## Restoring the Great Sandy's Ecological Health

This short item isn't directly about K'gari directly, it's more about Korrawinga, what we call the Great Sandy Strait. I know little of Butchulla lore, but I think Korrawinga was formed by Yindingie with the assistance of the spirit K'gari.

Another version of this story is that what we now call K'gari is the northernmost coastal sand mass by the longshore drift of sandy sediments from south coast NSW, the Hawkesbury and Hunter Rivers to deposit sand eastwards of major volcanoes such as Mount Ebor, Mount Warning and those of the Glasshouse Mountains. This took place as sea levels rose and fell, particularly during the Pleistocene Epoch. But just off Sandy Cape there is a major marine canyon into which remaining sand flowed to the abyssal plain of the Coral Sea. Without the scouring of current-driven sand, coral reefs could grow in the warm shallow seas, northwards of K'gari.

This is why the Mary, Burrum and Burnett Rivers are now recognised as the southernmost Reef Catchment rivers, and why the Great Sandy Strait and Hervey Bay are recognised as the southernmost inshore receiving waters of the Reef Catchment.

After over a century of and-clearing, ill-considered coastal development and fishery exploitation, the condition of these receiving waters and Great Barrier Reef have noticeably declined over the last few decades. The latest iteration of ongoing efforts to improve water quality in Reef Catchments such as Mary, Burrum and Burnett is the "[Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy](#)"

Apparently motivated by Australian and Queensland governments promise to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee that revised Water Quality targets would be met by 2030, this Strategy is intended to ... decrease water pollution in Reef catchments.

I attended an online webinar introducing the Draft Strategy, after which a fellow attendee expressed frustration with the interminable reinvention of this particular wheel. Nevertheless, they're giving us all the opportunity to *Have Our Say* on this draft Strategy. We have until 19 November (15 days after Melbourne Cup) to give feedback and comment.

My own feedback will focus on the deterioration in the Sandy Strait, most notably the episodic losses of the seagrass on which turtles, dugongs and many other animals depend. Writing about that loss in the FINIA newsletter of September 2023 [Reflecting on Tin Can Bay Seagrass Decline](#), I pondered whether the catastrophic depletion of sea cucumbers due to overfishing in the 1990's might have something to do with seagrass loss since then.



*The 2022 River Heads flood plume enters the Great Muddy Strait (Photo: Jess Dean, MRCCC)*

Well might I ponder, but the good news is, someone is now actively researching this question. That person is USC Ph.D. candidate, Alison Hammond.

Alison's working hypothesis is that sea cucumbers are important for the health of seagrass such as used to cover much of the Great Sandy Strait and Hervey Bay before they were over-exploited. Loss of sea cucumbers may have consequently affected water quality in these inshore waters that are the southernmost Reef catchment.

Alison is currently seeking any information, be it anecdotes and personal recollection or written records and photographs, relating to the sea cucumber fishery and seagrass presence in the Great Sandy and Hervey Bay waters, as per her request in this newsletter.

*Article contributed by David Arthur, Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council*

## Sea Cucumber Stories Wanted

The University of the Sunshine Coast is undertaking a research project on the sea cucumber (bêche-de-mer) fishery in Hervey Bay; the Great Sandy Straits and Tin Can Bay in the 1980s and 1990s. Project results will be used to map the historical and current distribution of sea cucumbers.

PhD student Alison Hammond is reaching out to local current and retired commercial fishers, as well as others who may have been involved in the industry, to invite their participation in this research.

Participants will be invited to participate in a face-to-face interview, which will begin with a questionnaire. It is expected that the questionnaire and interview will take around two hours.

For more information about this project, or to express your interest in participating, please call Alison on 0419 740 994 or email [alison.hammond@research.usc.edu.au](mailto:alison.hammond@research.usc.edu.au).



*The sea cucumber, *Thelenota anax*, with researcher Alison Hammond (Photo: Steve Purcell)*

## Dingo Detour: Rangers Guide Wild Guests Home to the Bush



*What to do when a family of K'gari wongari pups move in under a private residence? (Photo: QPWS)*

K'gari NRM wongari (dingo) rangers and recently stepped in to help a family of five tiny 4-6 week dingo pups who had decided that the cozy space under a private residence was the perfect place for their first home. While undeniably adorable, it's no secret that living so close to human activity puts these young dingoes, and people, at significant risk. The mother of these pups has been monitored by rangers since 2018 and are accustomed to her habituated behaviour.

What to do - acting quickly and using their expertise, rangers carefully planned deterrent strategies to encourage the proud parents to move their pups back into the bush, where they'd have a much safer start to life.

These strategies started with permission from the property owners, initial application of dog deterrent scents (ineffective!), electrical tape installation and strong citronella scent was successful in deterring the parents, bright spotlights deterred some pups from returning followed by blocking known access points, and finally installation of effective barrier fencing and panels by the resident owners under the low set house to prevent full access. The family has retreated inland.

This successful outcome for the pups moving on of their own accord, without handling and no longer living under the residence was a heartwarming reminder of the important work being done to maintain a healthy

balance between these apex predators and humans. K'gari rangers are committed to fostering sustainable coexistence and work hard to maintain relationships with property owners and stakeholders.

Special recognition also goes to the island's private property owners who've made significant improvement to being dingo safe by fencing off under their homes, veranda gates and extended barriers on the rental properties to stop potential denning in these areas. Some are harder to convince than others but initiatives like this are vital for reducing early familiarity and habituation and thereby dingo-human interactions and protecting both visitors and our beloved dingoes. It's partnerships like these that make a big difference.'

*Article contributed by QPWS Wongari Ranger Olivia, K'gari NRM – Wongari team*

## Bushfire Season: Fire Fuel Assessment

The K'gari Fire Enhancement Team took a day out of bushfire prep to meet with Senior Bushfire Consultant Guy Morgan on island to discuss collaborative bushfire mitigation planning around neighbouring residential and resort tenure.



*K'gari fire team members Ruben, Nathan and Jadey honing their skills with Guy Morgan in the protection block north of KBRV (Photo: QPWS)*

We took the opportunity to share knowledge and brush up on fuel assessment tools and new technologies. It is surprising how fast the soils dry out and the fuel loads accumulate, even after a prescribed burn only 12 months before.

K'gari QPWS working units are in full preparation and awareness mode with increasing bushfire conditions and working with neighbours and stakeholders to ensure solid working relationships in the fire space.

Collaborative fire management is important, and we acknowledge and thank stakeholders and other fire practitioners who apply appropriate fire on K'gari.

*Article contributed by Linda Behrendorff, QPWS K'gari NRM – Fire Enhancement Team*

## Effective and collaborative fire management on K'gari

Collaborative fire management is important to ensure planned burn program objectives are met for the island.

The K'gari 2025 collaborative fire management program commenced with productive meetings and planning leading to the successful completion of thirteen QPWS & BAC approved proposals incorporating 25 burn treatment areas within the limited weather window presented this season.

Small-block asset protection burns, bushfire mitigation burns, stage-burning larger land management (conservation) burns, and Butchulla cultural burning preparation were undertaken from April to August.



*Pre burn SMEAC at Dundubara (Photo: QPWS)*

On-ground fire application to break up broader bushfire affected landscape continued supported by strategic aerial incendiary for selected large-landscape management areas north of Dundubara and southern K'gari south of Dilli Village.

Collaborative works assisting Butchulla, DoR and FCRC to treat ALA and USL protection areas has provided further protection to the islands' residential areas.

Fire preparation is also an important part of any burn program and is essential to preserve life, property, habitat trees, infrastructure and assets including cultural assets.

Targeted planned burning is a key management tool conducted seasonally and aimed to reduce fuel loads to mitigate risk of severe bushfire, protect life, infrastructure and residential areas. It is also important to



achieve fire schedules that are appropriate for the ecosystems being managed and conserved. This can only be achieved on K'gari through collaboration.

We are currently working in the Bushfire season and preparation works have been undertaken to mitigate risk. This has included strategic fire line maintenance in accordance with the fire line strategy and recommendations, removing vegetation from fences and other infrastructure and maintenance and auditing equipment.

Fire on K'gari is everyone's business. Thank you to all stakeholders and other fire practitioners who contributed to making this season effective.

*Article contributed by Linda Behrendorff, QPWS K'gari NRM – Fire Enhancement Team*

## K'gari Tops the Island Charts for Frog and Freshwater Fish Biodiversity

Researchers have completed the first comprehensive database of freshwater species on Australian islands. The results of the research have been published in [Diversity and Distributions journal](#).

The University of Queensland Biodiversity Research Group study found that of 567 islands with freshwater habitats, 197 contained 102 frog species, amounting to almost half of all known Australian frog species. Ninety-five freshwater fish species were found, 11 of which were vulnerable or endangered.

The study found K'gari, the world's largest sand island, had the most frog and freshwater species of all Australian islands.



*Sam Ho started investigating the intersection of freshwater habitats and islands as an honours student (Photo: UQ)*

Researcher Sam Ho said he was shocked by the number of frog species and hoped the information would be used to conserve those at risk of extinction on the mainland.

Biodiversity Research Group Head, Professor Salit Kark said the role of islands as refuges for endangered species meant they had often been "extinction hubs" where the last remaining individuals of a species had been lost, including the King Island emu and the Norfolk Island kaka.

Professor Kark said the rich biodiversity on K'gari highlighted the value of its World Heritage status.

"I think it should be really one of the flagship islands that we're further studying and investing in," she said.

Mr Ho and his colleagues did a year-long search of scientific databases, journals and government reports, boosted by the Atlas of Living Australia, Australia's largest biodiversity database fed by citizen-science platforms such as iNaturalist.

The data collected by growing numbers of citizen scientists was a boon for the researchers, but Professor Kark said there was a "trade-off" with the impacts of the increasing numbers of visitors.

"I think it's really that balance that needs to be thought about quite carefully, and we must have more data both on the [visitor] impacts but also for native and introduced species," she said.

Experts say the data shows stronger protections for K'gari's biodiversity – possibly including a cap on visitor numbers – are needed. They say that without improved management, ever-increasing tourist numbers – including the crowds expected during the Brisbane Olympics in 2032 – are putting the island's World Heritage status at risk.

*Adapted from an article first published on 10 September 2025 by James Taylor, [ABC Wide Bay](#)*

## Dingoes are not domestic dogs

For decades, scientists, policymakers, graziers and land managers have been locked in a surprisingly high stakes debate over what defines a dingo. Are these wild canids their own species? Or are they simply feral dogs?

The intensity of the debate can seem baffling. But the naming of animals influences how they are perceived and managed. The dingo debate has very real consequences for conservation laws, cultural recognition and respect, and the future of one of Australia's iconic animals.

In 2020, researchers proposed four conditions dingoes would have to meet to be considered separate from domestic dogs: reproductive isolation (they don't mate and produce fertile offspring), genetic distinctiveness, independent evolutionary path and distinctiveness from South-East Asian village dogs, which superficially resemble dingoes.

In the authors' [new research](#), they lay out the scientific case showing dingoes do indeed meet these requirements, across genetic, behavioural, ecological and archaeological evidence. The result: a clear answer: dingoes are distinct.

Australia's wild canines have been on their own evolutionary path for thousands of years. As a distinct lineage, they should be recognised as a species or subspecies. They are not *Canis familiaris*, the domestic dog. They should be named either *Canis dingo* or *Canis lupus dingo*.



Wongari (dingo) foraging on K'gari (Photo: Juliet Musgrave)

### Species aren't always in neat boxes

One of the greatest challenges for modern taxonomy is how to categorise "species" that don't fit in neat little boxes but exist along a continuum. It's harder still for species whose long and significant associations with humans can lead to substantial changes that are evolutionarily significant.

It's widely accepted domestic and wild animal populations should be distinguished and be given different scientific names. Domestication is often portrayed as a simple before-and-after event. But this isn't accurate.

Domestication is a long, messy continuum. Some domesticated species such as cattle and modern dog breeds depend on humans for their survival. But dingoes are different. They have lived alongside people but are also entirely capable of surviving without us and have done so for thousands of years.

In evolutionary terms, what matters is the trajectory. Did human contact fundamentally alter the appearance, biology and behaviour of the species, locking it into a domestic lifestyle? Or did human influence have little effect, meaning the species has been shaped primarily by natural selection in the wild?

Do dingoes meet the criteria to be considered taxonomically distinct?

Our research shows how the four conditions have been met to consider dingoes separate:

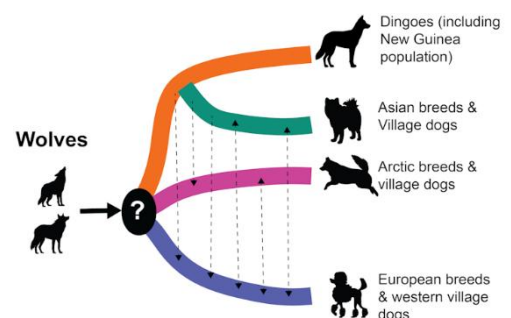
#### 1. Reproductive isolation

Dingoes have been separated from other *Canis* lineages for 8,000-11,000 years. Genetic studies show dingoes have little contemporary interbreeding with domestic dogs, even when they live in the same areas. While all *Canis* species can interbreed and produce fertile offspring, differences in breeding seasons and behaviour act as natural barriers. Unlike dingoes, domestic dogs rarely establish wild, self-sustaining populations.

#### 2. Genetic distinctiveness

Genome-wide analyses reveal dingoes descend from an ancient "eastern" dog lineage, while most modern domestic dogs come from "western" and "Arctic" dog lineages. Since their arrival in Australia, dingoes have remained genetically isolated.

This diagram shows what is currently known about the evolutionary relationships between dingoes, wolves and domestic dog lineages. At present, the question over how dogs evolved is unresolved.



Current knowledge of the evolutionary relationships between dingoes, wolves and domestic dogs – Diagram by Kylie Cairns

### 3. An independent evolutionary lineage

From a genetic point of view, dingoes are more distinct from domestic dogs than domestic dog breeds are from each other. Modern dog breeds have undergone waves of mixing and human selection, while dingoes have not. This is why dingoes lack the genetic adaptations to starch-rich diets that domestic dogs evolved alongside agriculture and human contact.

Dingoes have carved out their own ecological niche in Australia's unique environments, from deserts to snowy mountains. They have developed separate traits such as hyperflexible joints and a single breeding season over autumn and winter. By contrast, humans have heavily shaped the evolutionary path of domestic dogs, making them reliant on us.

### 4. Clear up whether dogs found in South-East Asia are dingoes

Some researchers have suggested dingo-like village dogs in South-East Asia are actually dingoes. While dingoes share some ancestors with these dogs, modern genetic evidence shows dingoes and their closest relatives, New Guinea singing dogs, are a separate population.

#### What's in a name?

The question over how dogs evolved is not yet resolved. Some taxonomists believe dogs are a subspecies of wolf, while others disagree. Given this uncertainty, giving dingoes a unique scientific name can be done in two ways.

If we consider dingoes distinct from both dogs and wolves, the most appropriate name would be *Canis dingo* — recognising the dingo as its own species with a long, separate evolutionary history.

But if dingoes are not distinct from wolves, the correct name would be *Canis lupus dingo*. This would treat it as a subspecies of wolf, while still acknowledging its wild lineage separate to domestic dogs.

#### The name of the dingo matters

There is real power in the name of a species.

Under some state laws, dingoes are defined as “wild dogs”. This means dingoes are targeted for lethal control – even in many national parks. If treated as a domestic dog, dingoes can be ineligible for official threatened species lists.

As a result, the species is often overlooked for targeted conservation, while its culturally significant role for many First Nations peoples is often not recognised nor respected.

Defining dingoes as a distinct species or subspecies would allow governments to differentiate them from domestic dogs in laws, policies and conservation programs, and align western science with First Nations knowledge holders who have long distinguished between dingoes and dogs.

#### Ending decades of confusion will take work

To clear up long-running disagreement over the dingo, we believe the time has come for an independent, evidence-based review by a national scientific body. This would bring together geneticists, ecologists, taxonomists and First Nations representatives.

This approach helped untangle similarly knotty problems overseas, such as the United States National Academies' review to settle the taxonomy of red and Mexican wolves.

An Australian review could finally end decades of confusion for the dingo and ensure our laws reflect the most up-to-date scientific evidence.

Taxonomic debates might sound obscure. But this naming question will shape the future of one of Australia's ecologically and culturally significant animals. We believe the evidence shows the dingo is not a domestic dog – it's on its own path. The question is whether Australia can accept this evidence.

*This article was originally published in [The Conversation](#) on 21 August 2025 by Kylie M Cairns (UNSW Sydney), Bradley Smith (CQUniversity), Euan Ritchie (Deakin University) and Thomas Newsome (University of Sydney).*



## Dates for the Diary

**What:** **Voices of K'gari – Research, Respect and Responsibility Conference**

**When:** 10-11 November

**For:** The biennial K'gari conference will be held again this year at the University of the Sunshine Coast's Fraser Coast campus. A joint initiative of UniSC and FIDO, the conference will be delivered with the support of the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation and the Butchulla Native Title Aboriginal Corporation. The conference will include Citizen Science, Cultural Knowledge, monitoring, and academic and student research.

**Cost:** Full registration \$110, \$60 for students. To register please click [here](#).

**More info:** Please email Dr Kim Walker, [kwalker4@usc.edu.au](mailto:kwalker4@usc.edu.au)

**What:** **FINIA Meeting**

**Where:** University of the Sunshine Coast Fraser Coast Campus

**When:** Tuesday 11 November 2025 from 3-5pm.

**For:** FINIA's partners meet quarterly to provide updates and collaborate on projects. Three meetings are held on the mainland with an annual field trip to K'gari each year. FINA's meetings for 2026 are scheduled for Tuesday 24 February – 10am to 2pm, Maryborough Town Hall (upstairs in the supper/reception room), Tuesday/Wednesday 18/19 May – K'gari Field Trip, Tuesday 4 August - 10am to 2pm, Maryborough Town Hall, and Tuesday 17 November - 10am to 2pm, Maryborough Town Hall

**Cost:** Free

**More info:** To register for the meeting, please email Sue Sargent at [contactFINIA@gmail.com](mailto:contactFINIA@gmail.com).

**What:** **Weed Management**

**Where:** Happy Valley, K'gari

**When:** 16-22 November.

**For:** Peter Shooter leads these trips to help tackle the heavy weed infestation around Happy Valley. A group of up to eight people share *Kurrawa*, a comfortable holiday house in the Centre of Happy Valley. The group work to contain a particularly aggressive weed with poisonous seeds, *Abrus precatorius* Var. *Africanus*. This weed heavily impacts local vegetation but is not found elsewhere on K'gari. The team also focus on large woody weeds, Easter cassia and lantana. Note - fitness is needed to carry heavy chemical backpack sprays across steep terrain.

**Cost:** \$300 (\$200 for concessions) to subsidise costs.

**More info:** Please send any questions to [weeding@fido.org.au](mailto:weeding@fido.org.au).

**What:** **K'gari Clean Up Great Walk**

**When:** 23 March to 5 April 2026

**For:** Volunteers can sign up to join the team on their great walk from Sandy Cape to Hook Point over the 13-day program. You will be equipped with collection bags, PPE, accommodation, meals, and sunscreen. Drop Bear Adventures is providing all transport over to the island and accommodation at their Eco Retreat! Volunteers can expect to walk approximately 20km over 3 days (5-10km per day).

**Cost:** FREE

**More info:** Please email Hana, [hana@kgarifraserisland.com.au](mailto:hana@kgarifraserisland.com.au)

## Funding Opportunities

**What:** **Australian Heritage Grant**

**For:** The Australian Heritage Grants program provides \$5.3 million each year to support places included on the National Heritage list. There is a call for applications each year. Places recognised for their natural, Indigenous or historic heritage values can apply. The program aims to: maintain, protect, conserve and/or improve the management of access to the National Heritage Values for which the place is listed, and improve engagement or awareness of the National Heritage Value/s for which the place is listed. Applicants can apply for, and

receive, up to two grants per listed place through this grant opportunity. Minimum grant amount is \$25K (GST exclusive) and maximum grant \$400K (GST exclusive).

When: Applications are open now and close at 5pm (AEDT) on 5 December 2025.  
Phone: 13 28 46.  
Website: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/grants-and-funding/australian-heritage-grants>

**What: Gambling Community Benefit Fund**

For: Provide one-off grants for not-for-profit organisations to help provide community services or activities that benefit the Queensland community. Maximum grants for the next round are \$35,000.

When: New dates for 2026 will be released soon.  
Email: [cbf@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:cbf@justice.qld.gov.au)  
Phone: 1800 633 619  
Website: <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/initiatives/community-grants>

**What: Wettenhall Environment Trust —Small Environmental Grant Scheme**

For: Objectives of the Small Environmental Grants Scheme (up to \$15K) are flora and fauna conservation and threatened mammal conservation with one or more of the following: monitoring/recording data, community education, community capacity building (training), and research/science.

When: Next round opens 8 December 2025 for funding in February 2026  
Phone: (03) 5472 1316 or 0431 219 980 - Elizabeth (Beth) Mellick, Executive Officer  
Email: [beth@wettenhall.org.au](mailto:beth@wettenhall.org.au)  
Website: <https://wettenhall.org.au/grants/small-environmental-grants/>

**What: Purves Environmental Fund**

For: Support 12-month proposals of up to \$50,000, that meet the Fund's current focus areas: degradation of wilderness, over exploitation of natural resources and pollution. Grant applications are through an EOI process.

When: Applications are open year-round.  
Website: <https://www.purvesenvirofund.org.au/funding>

## Thank You to Our Sponsors!

*FINIA – the Natural Integrity Alliance for K'gari* is a non-incorporated, not-for-profit umbrella organisation for its partners. As a non-incorporated organisation with no dedicated funding to support our meetings, administration, barge transfers, or accommodation, we rely on our partners to support activities on the K'gari World Heritage site. We acknowledge Fraser Coast Regional Council, Sealink – Kingfisher Bay Resort & K'gari Explorer Tours, the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and our outstanding contributors, volunteers and donors for their generous support.

Without this generosity, FINIA's activities would not be possible.

*Thank you*



Visitors to K'gari are reminded to 'Be dingo-safe!' at all times:

- Always stay close (within arm's reach) of children and young teenagers
- Always walk in groups and carry a stick.
- Camp in fenced areas where possible
- Do not run. Running or jogging can trigger a negative dingo interaction.
- Never feed dingoes.
- Lock up food stores and iceboxes (even on a boat)
- Never store food or food containers in tents, and
- Secure all rubbish, fish, and bait.