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K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage Advisory Committee – Communiqué 21 August 2023

The seventh K'gari World Heritage Advisory Committee (KWHAC) meeting was held online. KWHAC provides advice to State and Commonwealth Ministers and management agencies on matters relating to the identification, protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural values of the K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage Area from Butchulla, scientific and community perspectives.

Three Year Plan and Priority Projects

KWHAC members discussed upcoming funding opportunities through the Commonwealth Government including the Australian Heritage Grants and First Nations Heritage Grants Program. KWHAC members offered their support for the following priority projects for K'gari:

- 1) A phased approach to develop and implement a Biosecurity Strategy for K'gari.
- 2) The development of Butchulla Cultural Protocols for the K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage Area.

KWHAC will provide letters of support for grant applications for the vital K'gari Biosecurity Strategy and Butchulla Cultural Protocols projects.

Great Sandy Marine Park Revised Zoning Plan

KWHAC members were provided with an overview of proposed changes to the Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan. The Marine Park covers an area of 6000Km² from Double Island Point to Baffle Creek and includes the Great Sandy Ramsar Wetland, parts of the K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage Area (to 500m offshore), a Dugong Protection Area and eleven declared Fish Habitat Areas.

After extensive consultation, members were pleased to see an increased area (from 3.9% to 12.8% and across all 23 habitat types) of the Marine Park protected by green (Marine National Park) zones increasing the protection of habitat and species. A total area of 28.6% of the marine park is now protected by either green or yellow (Conservation Park) zones.

Complementary zoning in areas like Platypus Bay, where a new designated area will prohibit motorised watersports and complement K'gari management, and a Wathumba Creek 'Go Slow Area' for natural and cultural values will help maintain K'gari's Outstanding Universal Value.

Migratory shorebirds (listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) will also benefit from parkwide disturbance provisions and four Seasonal Shorebird Closure Areas, including Moon Point on K'gari, where a 2-month closure will apply at the beginning and end of the shorebird season (to allow for shorebirds to recover and prepare for their northern hemisphere migrations).

KWHAC members were disappointed that levels of green zone protection afforded to the Marine Park were considerably less than Moreton Bay (16%) and Great Barrier Reef (33%) Marine Parks. Committee members were concerned about a lack of green zone protection for K'gari's high energy,

East Coast beaches that extended to high water, and the Department's ability to enforce new rules and zoning areas.

An additional \$13.5M has been made available to support the Marine Park's management over the next five years with an additional vessel and staff - including a new four person Land and Sea Ranger team for Butchulla Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC).

KWHAC members congratulated the Queensland Government for their robust planning process and encouraged the early introduction of long-term monitoring across the Marine Park (including contested areas such as K'gari's high energy beaches) to support adaptive management and future reviews.

Biosecurity – Lessons from Lord Howe Island

Paula Pollock, Manager Environment and Community Services was invited by the Chair to provide an overview of the [Lord Howe Island Biosecurity Strategy 2022-24](#) and the benefits, challenges and some of the lessons learned through recent campaigns including the Rodent Eradication Program (REP) and the community's support to eradicate a second round of myrtle rust.

Lord Howe has an enviable history in biosecurity having successfully eradicated pigs (1979), cats (1981), feral goats (2013-wild and 2019-domestic) and myrtle rust (2016 and 2023). The work focuses on the protection of the island's unique and threatened species with 86% of extinction on islands linked to invasive species.

Rats have been implicated in the extinction of five endemic bird species, at least 13 species of endemic invertebrates, and two plant species on Lord Howe Island, with over 70 species impacted on by rats. Since the REP's completion, three species thought to be extinct have been rediscovered on the island.

Ms Pollock highlighted the lessons learned, which included the critical importance of having community buy-in for the Strategy. She noted that with the Strategy's implementation, the island was undergoing an "ecological renaissance" and even those islanders who had been initially opposed to the REP were now living with the program's benefits.

K'gari (Djaa Narawi) Land and Sea Country Conference

KWHAC members were pleased to hear plans for the first joint University of Sunshine Coast (UniSC) and Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO) *K'gari Land and Sea Country: djaa – ngarawinj 2023 Conference* being held at UniSC Fraser Coast Campus on 9-10 November 2023.

The conference will build on the outcomes of UniSC's 2021 symposium with a program designed around knowledge sharing, partnership development and collaboration on research priorities for K'gari and surrounding Sea Country to generate a greater understanding of management needs, including research, and caring for Land and Sea Country in the future.

K'gari Climate Adaptation Plan

KWHAC members were provided with an update on the K'gari Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP).

KWHAC members were asked for their assistance at the upcoming CAP Workshop being held on 30-31 August 2023. Committee members will provide scientific and technical advice on the vulnerability and risk (likelihood and consequences) of climate change to values that have been identified by the Butchulla community. Values include Outstanding Universal Value attributes, natural and cultural values.

The project team is applying the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) [Climate change toolkit](#) for World Heritage properties in Australia, modifying it for a Butchulla-led process.

Updates

Updates were provided by the Burnett Mary Regional Group, DCCEEW, Department of Environment and Science, and BNTAC.