



With permission: Conway Burns

Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Combined Committees Communiqué April 2018



The combined Committees of the Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) met in Hervey Bay and on Fraser Island (K'gari) between Monday 16 April and Wednesday 18 April 2018.

Crucial issues:

K'gari, identified as Fraser Island World Heritage Area (FIWHA) was internationally recognised over 25 years ago for its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). It is, however, the collective view of the Committees, that currently neither the funding nor the management planning reflects this World Heritage status. The Committees request that both the Australian and Queensland Governments work to address this.

The Committees collectively recognise that K'gari (Fraser Island) WHA should be managed in a formally (legally) recognised and resourced partnership with the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) who are the Native Title holders.

The Committees recognise K'gari as a cultural landscape and support the urgent need for cultural mapping to be undertaken to enable cultural landscape values to be appropriately recognised, both nationally and internationally, and effectively integrated into management.

The Committees collectively endorse the recognition and resourcing of all aspects of management for Butchulla cultural values. A revised management plan undertaken in partnership with the Butchulla People must address the conservation, presentation and transmission (interpretation) of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for K'gari within a Butchulla cultural framework.

Myrtle Rust

The Committees note with considerable concern, the presentations on Myrtle Rust by Dr Geoff Pegg and Mr Bob Makinson. With over 350 species from 57 genera affected, Myrtle Rust has the capacity to seriously compromise the Outstanding Universal Value of FIWHA over the next decade. Current research suggests that in a single decade, Myrtle Rust could

significantly compromise key Myrtaceae communities on the island, notably Melaleuca swamps and rainforest pioneer taxa, and consequently the natural and cultural landscapes associated with the OUV in these ecosystems.

The Committees call for urgent research funding to identify impacts of Myrtle Rust on K'gari and the implementation of management efforts to mitigate impacts including:

- Field surveys and emergency conservation actions to safeguard vulnerable species (including preservation, collection and conservation of germplasm/seed of key species);
- Identification of potential cultural impacts and necessary practice-change for both flora and fauna associated with rainforest and wetland Myrtaceae; and
- Impact monitoring of affected species, vegetation communities and sites.

Other points:

1. The Committees gratefully recognise the Cultural Knowledge training generously shared by the BAC and thank Elder Gayle Minniecon and Conway Burns for their outstanding presentation.
2. The Committees have repeatedly requested that accurate visitation numbers to the WHA be collected and made available for the purposes of planning, management, risk assessment and research. The Committees keenly anticipate a concrete outcome through the offer from QPWS to work with permit holders to compile these data.
3. In recognition of the resource constraints to both the Department and Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation, the Committees endorse a review of fees for Fraser Island (K'gari) with a view to contributing effective funding for the BAC. We note that this was supported by former Minister for the Environment, Hon Dr Steven Miles.

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

The Scientific Advisory Committee would welcome the formal incorporation of one (or more) Butchulla representatives onto the SAC (as endorsed by the BAC).

The Committee recognises the fundamental role of monitoring in effective management planning and respectfully advise that the current draft Great Sandy Management Plan is deficient in this regard.

The Committee recognises the importance, and the right of the Butchulla people to be consulted in the initial planning for research and to approve applications for research.

The Committee also notes that it is a requirement under Section 5(c) of the World Heritage Convention that research is undertaken on all World Heritage properties. The Committee urges prompt resolution of current disconnects between the Butchulla (BAC) and QPWS processes to minimise disruption in research effort and potential to compromise OUV.