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Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Combined Committees Communiqué June 2019



The combined Committees of the Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) met on K'gari (Fraser Island) on Tuesday 2 and Wednesday 3 April 2019.

The Committees acknowledged the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) for the moving cleansing and smoking ceremony at Boorangoora (Lake McKenzie), performed in the presence of Committee members, to mark the passing of two Japanese students on 30 March 2019.

The Committees also acknowledged the sad passing of long-term member and advocate for K'gari, Dr John Sinclair AO, with a minute's silence.

The Committees welcomed Cheryl Leavy, the new Executive Director of the Queensland Government's Partnerships Branch and commended the increased focus that this will bring to ensuring greater participation of the Butchulla People in the life of K'gari. The Committees also welcomed Rachel Garcia from the Natural Heritage Branch of the Department of the Environment and Energy.

The Committees discussed several topics relevant to K'gari and its status as a World Heritage property, raising several concerns for the consideration of the property's managers to meet the Operational Guidelines under the World Heritage Convention.

Strategic Management Plan for Fraser Island (K'gari)

The Committees noted that, while the Great Sandy Management Plan is currently being reviewed as part of the Queensland Government's new Values-Based Park Management Framework (VBPMF), this document is not strictly relevant to the World Heritage property as a whole and does not specifically recognise or manage Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) across the entire World Heritage estate. The Committees have requested the opportunity to revisit the document when the Great Sandy Management Plan is finalised.

The Committees **recommend that a Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Area Strategic Management Plan be developed** that recognises the OUV of the property and makes greater provision for the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of these values. This will enable the Committees to provide informed advice on the future management of the property and assist with meeting Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention to:



- protect, conserve and present the World Heritage values of the property
- integrate the protection of the area into a comprehensive planning program
- give the property a function in the life of the Australian community
- strengthen appreciation and respect of the property's World Heritage values, particularly through educational and information programs
- keep the community broadly informed about the condition of the World Heritage values of the property; and
- enable appropriate scientific, technical, legal, administrative and financial measures necessary for achieving the preceding objectives.

World Heritage Communications Strategy

The Committees acknowledged the work of the Queensland Government's World Heritage Unit in promoting the property during the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the inscription in 2018. In the same way that Fraser Island World Heritage Area does not have a Strategic Plan, it was noted that there was no dedicated Communications Strategy for the World Heritage property.

The Committees welcome a review of previous communications strategies and plans for K'gari and **recommend that a World Heritage Communications Strategy be developed for K'gari** and embedded beneath the proposed Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Strategic Management Plan.

Myrtle Rust Outbreak

Dr Geoff Pegg of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) provided the Committees with an update on the Myrtle Rust and Environmental Biosecurity training for the Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers in May and August 2019. The training will culminate in the development of a forest biosecurity surveillance program and establishment of the first long-term myrtle rust monitoring program in Australia.

The committees note with some alarm that one of the keystone taxa for K'gari, Satinay (*Syncarpia Hillii*) is at least partially susceptible to Myrtle Rust. This species is iconic and critical for the long-term maintenance of rainforest on K'gari. Further monitoring is critical, and the establishment of a seed bank of the resistant stock is recommended.

The Committees welcomed the appointment of Dr Ian Thompson as Australia's first Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer and welcomed his interest in the Myrtle Rust project.

The Committees **support a more integrated approach across the Queensland Government to address weeds, pest animals and plant biosecurity** to increase the focus on environmental biosecurity (surveillance/monitoring, response and IUCN reporting) and **a whole of government approach to address environmental biosecurity and the risk it poses to the OUV of World Heritage properties in Australia.**

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) Management of Permits

The Committees raised concerns about the provision of relevant information from permit applications to the Advisory Committees for their deliberation. The Committees recommend the need for a review of the Permits System to ensure a greater requirement on permit holders for reporting (especially for research undertaken) and the provision of information in a synthesised format for the Butchulla community.

Furthermore, the Committees noted with concern that the permitting process in QPWS is significantly under-resourced. In particular, QPWS records only limited species data from permit reports, with no other information systematically recorded or passed on to relevant authorities. As a result, key scientific findings that could inform management of Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Area are consequently lost.

The Committees **recommend a review of the permit reporting system that ensures key findings from research reports are passed to the property's land managers (QPWS and the BAC) the World Heritage Unit and advisory committees.**

Research on Fraser Island (K'gari)

The Committees discussed the need for a more integrated approach to future research on K'gari such that the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) as the Prescribed Body Corporate acting on behalf of the Native Title holders, the Butchulla community, are involved in all stages of research planning. The BAC should be considered the first point of contact to discuss future research projects on K'gari and will be working towards identifying future collaborative projects that will meet the needs of Country.

IUCN Outlook Reporting 2020

The SAC is preparing an information dossier that will be made available to the IUCN independent assessor to enable them access to the most current and up-to-date knowledge and advice relevant to the status of the Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Area. This process has reiterated the need for a greater focus on monitoring of OUV on K'gari. The SAC will also include cultural values in their report, as these are relevant to the life of the property.

Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers

The Committees welcomed Chantel Van Wamelen and Corey Currie from the Butchulla Land and Sea Ranger Team who provided an update on the work that was being undertaken by the Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers and Community Rangers (who are also assisting with on-ground works and projects). The Committees were excited to hear that the Land and Sea Ranger teams had been granted a further two years of funding and were encouraged to see the participation of the BAC and rangers in the ongoing management and protection of K'gari.

The Committees thank the Queensland Government's World Heritage Unit and the Commonwealth Government's Department of Environment and Energy for their participation and ongoing support for the Committees.