

Question on Notice
No. 484
Asked on Tuesday, 15 April 2008

QUESTION:

MR GIBSON asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) —

With reference to the recent actions by his department in establishing dingo-proof fences on Fraser Island—

- (1) What public consultation occurred prior to the commencement of work on establishing dingo-proof fences on Fraser Island, including the methods of consultation adopted and a breakdown of the cost of each method?
- (2) What was the basis of the decision to approve the establishment of dingo-proof fences on Fraser Island and what scientific reports or internal reports were drawn upon in supporting that decision?
- (3) How many documented incidents of the public feeding of dingoes have been recorded in the communities targeted for the dingo fences?

ANSWER:

- (1) In September 2007, the Premier announced that, in the interests of public safety, \$750,000 would be provided to erect dingo-deterrent fences around the Eurong and Happy Valley townships on Fraser Island.

Dingo-deterrent fencing has proved to be a very effective technique in minimising negative dingo-human interactions at other locations on Fraser Island where it's already in place.

Community engagement and intensive education and compliance programs have not succeeded in changing the attitude and behaviour of some residents and visitors towards dingoes. After these efforts failed, the Government felt compelled to act decisively to help protect public safety.

A member of the Fraser Island World Heritage Area Community Advisory Committee, and resident of Happy Valley, had previously proposed a motion to fence the townships, and this proposal was endorsed by the majority of Committee members.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPW) has provided information or held discussions with the Fraser Island World Heritage Area Community and Indigenous Advisory Committees, the Fraser Island Association (principally representing residents' interests), some individual residents/property owners, the then Hervey Bay and Maryborough City Councils and other affected agencies including the Department of Natural Resources and Water, the Rural Fire Service and the Queensland Police.

Additionally, QPW liaised closely with individual township representatives nominated by the Fraser Island Association to discuss access design and

drainage and how to minimise environmental and visual amenity impacts. QPW has also made every effort, wherever feasible, to accommodate the wishes of residents whose properties are directly affected by the presence of the fencing.

- 2) Six campgrounds and Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village have been fenced on Fraser Island and the Eurong and Happy Valley townships will bring this number to nine.

Dingo-deterrent fencing on Fraser Island has proved to be highly successful in minimising the risk from dingoes. Since fencing was installed, the high risk levels identified at these locations have significantly reduced with no aggressive or dangerous incidents reported within fenced areas.

Recommendations that erecting fences is one of the best ways of managing dingo-human interactions on Fraser Island are contained in EWL Sciences' 2003 *Audit of Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy* undertaken by one of Australia's leading dingo experts, Dr Laurie Corbett. Dr Corbett noted that dingo barrier fences "have been very successful in minimising dingo-human interactions" and he recommended that "fenced secure areas be constructed at all major campsites and day use areas" (Section 3.3.9 – Action 52).

The Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (revised 2006) states that the "two most significant actions (of the Dingo Management Strategy) are fencing of campgrounds and day use areas and the campground Ranger education and enforcement program" (Section 2.5.1).

Dr Corbett's recommendation about dingo fencing is reflected in Action 3.9 'Facilities and Structures' of the revised Dingo Management Strategy which states: "Dingo barrier fences are being or will be constructed at selected high risk picnic or camping grounds and their installation at other locations will be investigated for all development proposals".

The Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy, which incorporates Dr Corbett's recommendations, can be found on the EPA website (www.epa.qld.gov.au).

Dingoes displaying dangerous behaviour are humanely destroyed by QPW Rangers. In 2007, there were four dingoes destroyed, all associated with the townships of Eurong and Happy Valley. In 2006, there were five dingoes destroyed, three of which were associated with the townships of Eurong and Happy Valley.

- (3) Figures for individual township areas are not available; however, between May 2001 and March this year a total of 452 infringement notices have been issued relating to feeding or making food available to a dangerous animal.

As described in the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy, the result of people feeding and leaving food available to dingoes leads to the animal becoming habituated and adopting aggressive and dangerous behaviour which poses a serious threat to humans, particularly children. Food

availability is greatest where the largest number people congregate and the number of food outlets is highest.

Clear evidence of this is reflected in 2007 statistics which show that of 73 recorded aggressive/dangerous incidents, 47 of those incidents were associated with Eurong and Happy Valley townships.