

# Stakeholder Workshop

## Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

**Date:** Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

**Time:** 8.30am – 12.00pm

**Venue:** Maryborough Motel and Conference Centre

### **Background**

Ecosure has been engaged by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to conduct an objective and scientific review of the 2006 Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS). As part of the consultation process, a public workshop was held to obtain valuable input from stakeholders and interested parties for consideration in our review.

The overall objectives of the FIDMS are to:

- ensure the conservation of a sustainable wild dingo population on Fraser Island
- reduce the risk to humans
- provide visitors with safe opportunities to view dingoes in environment in near as possible to their natural state.

Animal welfare and ethical considerations underpin the FIDMS, and the welfare and wellbeing of dingoes is considered a key objective.

The workshop focused on key themes of the current Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (2006):

1. Managing People
2. Managing Dingoes
3. Research
4. Fraser Island World Heritage Area, Natural and Cultural Values.

Themes were then related back to each of the overall FIDMS objectives above.

## Program

ITEM	TIME	WHO	DETAIL
<b>Arrival</b>	8:15 onwards	All	Greeting and registrations.
<b>Introduction and background</b>	8:30	Scott Hetherington (Ecosure)	Welcome, housekeeping and introductions. Terms of reference, purpose of review, role of RSC and FIWHA, natural and cultural values.
<b>Panel presentations</b>	8:50	Ross Belcher (QPWS)	Managing people presentation.
	9:00	Dr Lee Allen (BQ)	Managing dingoes presentation.
	9:10	Dr Leah Burns (GU)	Research presentation.
	9:20	Mr Kevin Bradley (RSPCA)	Animal welfare/ethics presentation.
<b>Facilitated Discussion</b>	9:45	All	Questions from the floor to the expert panel.
<b>Morning Tea</b>	10.30	All	15 minute recess
			Participants requested to identify a theme (managing people; managing dingoes; research; World Heritage values) to participate in focus group discussion.
<b>Focus groups</b>	10.45	Ecosure	Focus groups to identify and discuss respondent's view of the effectiveness of the FIDMS and allow for additional comment.
<b>Wrap-up</b>	11.45	Ecosure	Close workshop.

## **Workshop participants**

A variety of stakeholder groups were represented by a total of 65 workshop participants (excluding panel members and facilitators), including:

- Burnett Mary River Group (BMRG)
- Butchulla people
- Dingo Conservation and Education Association Qld
- Durong Dingo Sanctuary
- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Fraser Coast Tess Wildlife Sanctuary
- Fraser Explorer Tours
- Fraser Island Association (FIA)
- Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO)
- Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance (FINIA)
- Fraser Island residents
- Fraser Island visitors and general community
- Fraser Island World Heritage Area (FIWHA) Committees
- Hervey Bay Electorate Office of Mr Ted Sorensen MP
- Kingfisher Bay Resort
- National Animal Rescue Groups Association (NARGA)
- National Dingo Preservation and Recovery Program (NDPRP)
- National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ)
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
- Save Fraser Island Dingoes (SFID)
- Sunfish
- World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

## **Introduction and background**

Scott Hetherington (Regional Manager, Ecosure)

### *Introduction*

- Welcome and acknowledgement of the Butchulla people as the traditional custodians of the land and other Aboriginal people present.
- The aim of the workshop is to gather as much input as possible to ensure best possible quality review.

### *Introduction to Ecosure:*

- Ecosure's establishment and development over the past 16 years into a successful company with offices in Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Rockhampton is founded in best practice wildlife management.
- In particular, research and investigation into identification of solutions to situations where wildlife and humans cause problems for each other.

- Our approach is to use great science and our great people to achieve best possible outcomes for biodiversity conservation and our clients' needs.

*Introduction of the Ecosure FIDMS review project team:*

- Jessica Boswell (Project Manager) - Wildlife Biologist currently completing a Master of Environmental Science. She has a keen interest in dingo conservation with more than eight years experience managing wildlife projects for local and Federal government, private industry and the resource sector.
- Dr Karen Higginbottom (Ecologist) - University academic and researcher in wildlife management for more than 20 years. Now self-employed consultant and Adjunct Associate Professor at Griffith University. Previously responsible for lead in research programs of Sustainable Tourism CRC on Wildlife Tourism & Sustainable Resources.
- Ben Allen (Dingo Ecologist) - Ben has over 10 years experience in dingo research and management in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, and has worked on both dingo conservation and control initiatives. He has published extensively on dingo ecology and management, and is presently involved in researching human-dingo conflicts and the ecology of dingoes in peri-urban areas.
- Scott Hetherington (Project Advisor) - Scott has worked extensively in the field of conservation management in both Queensland and New South Wales. Scott has played a key role in the delivery of regionally significant conservation projects including NatureSearch, South East Queensland Regional Plan, Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Gold Coast City Nature Conservation Strategy, Biodiversity Planning Assessments Tweed Byron Bush Futures and the Nature Refuge program.
- Emily Hatfield (Project Support) – Emily has 14 years experience in the wildlife industry and environmental education sector. As an ecologist for Ecosure, Emily has performed environmental assessments of flora and fauna habitat, as well as undertaking project administration, field survey preparation and report writing for a range of projects. A versatile member of Ecosure, Emily has also contributed to the design and facilitation of community engagement projects as well as assisting in the field with bush regeneration.

*Introduction of the Workshop expert panel*

- Expert panel convened for the workshop to provide information relevant to each of the strategy themes. All stages of consultation for the review aligned with these themes also.
- Each expert panel member will present a brief presentation aligned with the relevant theme, participate in group discussion including responding to questions from the floor & assist in providing any other required information during the focus group sessions
  - Managing People - Mr Ross Belcher - Regional Manager, Great Sandy QPWS
  - Managing Dingoes - Dr Lee Allen - Senior Zoologist, Biosecurity Queensland
  - Research - Dr Leah Burns - Senior Lecturer, Griffith University
  - Animal welfare - Mr Kevin Bradley – Director, Veterinary Services and Animal Operations

*Background and project structure*

- FIDMS review background and the terms of reference, required outcomes and project scope for the review presented

- The roles of each project stakeholder and governance model was presented and discussed including introduction and roles of the Review Steering Committee (RSC)
  - RSC convened by Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to monitor, evaluate and review work by consultant, provide independent point of contact for consultant to discuss issues relevant to the review, and provide recommendations to Minister for revision of FIDMS
  - Chair – Professor Hugh Possingham (UQ School of Biological Sciences)
  - Professor Clive Williams (UQ School of Veterinary Science)
  - Ms Sue Sargent (Burnett Mary Regional Group)
  - Professor Chris Johnson (UTAS School of Zoology)

#### *Progress to date*

- progressive review of methods and delivery of project objectives by steering committee
- consultation (model presented and discussed)
- literature compilation and review
- site assessments & case studies
- analysis of incident data, protocols and procedures (including multicriteria decision analysis).

#### *Fraser Island World Heritage, Natural and Cultural Values*

World Heritage values – FIWH values recognised by the FIDMS and key theme for inclusion in the review. Fraser Island listed in 1992 based on outstanding universal value, including:

- tall rainforest on sand – unique in the world
- half of the world's perched freshwater dune lakes
- ongoing geological processes including longshore drift
- biological processes including unusual rainforest succession and development of rare and biogeographically significant species of plants and animals.

For the purposes of the review, other significant natural and cultural values have been incorporated for consideration with the actual listed values.

Please refer to Attachment 1 for presentation slides.

### **Expert Panel Presentations**

#### **Managing People**

Ross Belcher (Regional Manager Great Sandy, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS))

- Fraser Island or K'Gari to the Butchulla people is the largest sand island in the world with outstanding natural values.
- In the National Park there are currently 28 unfenced campgrounds on eastern beach and 7 on western beach. QPWS has 4 fenced campgrounds, and is in the process of fencing another private campground.

- Many people visit and camp on the island i.e. in 2011-12 there were in excess of 200 000 camper nights in QPWS campgrounds; many more people use commercial accommodation and take day trips.
- The dingo population is estimated at 100-200 individuals depending on the breeding cycle and seasonal conditions.
- Range of legislation relevant to QPWS:
  - *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, and *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*: prohibit unauthorised/inadvertent feeding of animals or disturbing animals (i.e. approaching, luring, harming, teasing, touching, etc) On the spot fine (penalty infringement notice) of \$330 which can be extended to \$4400 by a court (which can accumulate if required)
  - *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, relevant to World Heritage listing - a person must not take an action which will significantly impact on a natural World Heritage value of the island.
- Education has been a key aspect of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS) since 1994. Broad objectives of the FIDMS are to;
  - ensure sustainability of wild dingo population on Fraser Island
  - reduce risk to humans
  - reduce deliberate and inadvertent feeding of dingoes by people
  - provide visitors with safe opportunities to view dingoes in environment in near as possible to their natural state.
- Much of this is achieved through visitor education.
- Current QPWS dingo safety actions include:
  - face to face camper briefings by rangers (3,500 in 2011-12)
  - media releases prior to busy periods, anticipation of problems/response to incidents
  - dingo websites including answers to Frequently Asked Questions
  - condition reports on internet including dingo safety information
  - brochures at various outlets
  - tour operators engaged and provided with updated information regularly
  - communication at meetings with Fraser Island Association, Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance and World Heritage Area (WHA) committees.
- Even with a comprehensive communications strategy some people do not behave appropriately, especially in relation to child safety and feeding dingoes. Rangers issued 26 infringement notices last year and many more warnings.
- Some people are not recognising that:
  - dingoes are wild predators – not similar to family pets
  - pups can look thin until learn to hunt effectively
  - dingoes are supposed to be lean and fit, and even lean animals are usually doing very well

- in any population some individuals are not equipped to survive And interference may have adverse effects on the viability of a population.
- Many people believe misleading and malicious information without question – big issue that QPWS constantly addresses.
- There are many positives, including a competent and committed workforce of rangers and support staff.
- Many community members and groups are supportive of the FIDMS.
- Some residents have signed up to volunteer and provide dingo safety messages to visitors to the island.
- The current government is reviewing the FIDMS, which provides significant opportunity for community input into a revised strategy for the management of a sustainable population of dingoes on Fraser Island for the future.

Please refer to Attachment 2 for presentation slides (supplement).

### **Managing Dingoes**

Dr Lee Allen (Senior Zoologist, Biosecurity Queensland).

- State government researcher for more than 30 years - PhD looking at impact of dingoes on the beef industry and the impact of dingo control on dingoes and other wildlife.
- A fundamental ecological principle for any wildlife population is to maintain the same size from one year to the next, for every individual born, that animal or another animal in the population has to pass away over the following 12 months. If that doesn't occur the population either increases or decreases. This reproductive surplus, or expendable surplus, is what drives natural selection and survival of the fittest. Thus each year, a proportion of the dingo population on Fraser Island must die of old age or misadventure (i.e. snake bite), some are killed by other dingoes, many will starve to death because they don't have a territory or prey resources, and some will be culled. It means that there is almost always a reproductive surplus that must battle it out to find place in a social group and territory to survive.
- In context of Fraser Island there are approximately 100 adults, divided into 20-25 social groups that produce four to six pups per group on average, so approximately 100 pups each year. Therefore through the year 100 dingoes need to perish on Fraser Island from one cause or another. Any more and the population will decrease, any less and the population will increase.
- Satellite tracking studies in past five yrs show 15-40% of young dingoes disperse from their natal area, as much as several 100 kilometres away.
- Dispersing animals need to find vacant territory where they can settle, and they are often looking for places that are resource rich, and safe (from territorial dingoes). This quite often ends up around human settlements.
- Issues associated with urban dingoes or dingoes dispersing and coming into town are found across the eastern seaboard. Photos of dingoes in urban areas from Qld (refer to presentation) – (top left) Sunshine Coast at back of residences, (top right) Townsville city dumpster, (bottom right) Central Qld township.
- Highlighted that conflict between dingoes and people is not peculiar to just Fraser Island, but it is probably a more serious issue on Fraser Island because a large part of Fraser

Island's population live in tents where human waste and resources are available to dingoes, and where human-dingo interactions are closer and potentially more hazardous.

- Map showing dingo movement data from a Sunshine Coast study - transmitters attached to dingoes in urban areas taking five minute traces for a period of three weeks.

Please refer to Attachment 3 for presentation slides

## Research

Dr Leah Burns (Senior Lecturer, Griffith University)

- Lecturer at Griffith University and an Environmental Anthropologist – social scientist, not an ecologist or dingo behaviour specialist.
- Categorised research into two broad groups as a two-sided equation;
  1. Dingo side
  2. People side
- Dingo/ecology side:
  - Research has included scat collection and fauna surveys; results show dingoes eat a wide range of food.
  - DNA sampling – suggests some unique genetic characteristics, but lot of evidence of hybridisation in DNA samples.
  - Movement studies – collars have shown Fraser Island dingoes are moving fairly large distances.
  - UQ – data on movement of 18 dingoes collected from GPS satellite collars that QPWS put on May – June last year with location reported every couple hours. Programmed to drop off in two stages, some in January and some in March 2012. This data is currently being analysed to look at home ranges and movement patterns across the island.
  - Research on population – estimates on how many through recent capture-mark-recapture study – recognises that population changes over the year and estimated at 150 +/- 50.
  - Research on dingo behaviour – example: Leah involved in 2004 ultrasonic device trial to create barrier to keep dingoes out of certain place, had it on reasonably good authority worked on domestic dogs. Trialled in two locations without success – dingoes walked straight through it.
- People studies:
  - Includes human-wildlife conflict research.
  - Education includes the 'Be dingo smart'/'Be dingo safe' campaigns, with external review (i.e. Beckmann).
  - Marketing includes looking at way we think about dingoes and maybe that we need to change i.e. looking at inconsistencies, not just on FI, but nationally on how we market, think and approach to inform management e.g. native/introduced, pure/hybrid, pest/protected, Fraser Island as a WHA/tourist playground.
  - Although Fraser Island is unique in many ways, research and management on mainland and overseas also useful to look at to move forward.



- Also important to recognise importance of dingoes in the context of combating mammal extinctions in their role in reducing foxes and cats.
- Current research includes:
  - UQ - Population study collar data being analysed now and will be PhD study through UQ.
  - Griffith Uni – detailed look at overseas context in detail i.e. coyote/wolf management quite different, and likely lessons to be learnt.

Please refer to Attachment 4 for presentation slides.

### **Animal Welfare and Ethics**

Kevin Bradley (Director of Veterinary Services and Animal Operations, RSPCA)

- Simplest definition of welfare within RSPCA – state of an animal as it tries to cope with its environment; considers physiological state, behavioural state and emotional state.
- FIDMS as it stands and many management strategies focus on conservation of species at a species level or landscape – welfare considers the individual level.
- Animals have intrinsic value and extrinsic values (value beyond own self i.e. cultural).
- Ethics – cross-over often between welfare and ethics. Philosophy that allows us to decide what's right/wrong, not absolutely, but in particular circumstance or for a particular group. Underpins our treatment of animals.
- Animal welfare law – RSPCA and Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation act under the *Animal Care and Protection Act* (Qld). Two key relevant sections of the Act to Fraser Island dingoes are aspects of duty of care, and cruelty.
- Raised points for consideration during focus groups: Is there a duty of care to wild animals? Is there a duty of care to animals that humans have interacted with? Can a charge of cruelty be brought with regards to wild animals?
- Laws that RSPCA inspectorate is empowered with are under the *Animal Care and Protection Act* – these include seizure, powers of entry, powers to investigate duty of care and cruelty allegations. Clarified that RSPCA only operates under this Act, do not have any powers under the NCA which is what the FIDMS is listed under.
- Some things that are legal may not align with RSPCA policies. In relation to Fraser Island dingoes, our national policy is that human interactions with wildlife should cause as little impact as possible. RSPCA acknowledge sometimes wild animals do need to be managed, and management plans should be justifiable and transparent with clear, measurable and objective outcomes based on science.
- Welfare issues associated with FID that have been raised with RSPCA:
  - Ear tags
  - Radio collars
  - Hazing
  - Trapping
  - Humane killing
  - Health status
  - Care for sick or injured dingoes.

- RSPCA recommendations include: research to be published in peer reviewed journals; human-interaction to be minimised through behavioural modification; advisory committee to be involved in management; and improved communications between stakeholders.

Please refer to Attachment 5 for presentation slides.

## **Facilitated Discussion**

Ecosure facilitated discussion between workshop participants and the expert panel for 45 minutes following presentations.

In summary there were eight questions relating to managing people; five on managing dingoes; one on research; one on FIWHA values and three general statements. Each question was addressed by the relevant panel member.

The allocated time of 45 minutes was sufficient to provide discussion around the majority of participant concerns.

General themes of questions or concerns voiced by participants during the facilitated discussion session included:

- cultural values of dingoes and historical relationship with Traditional Owners
- World Heritage values of Fraser Island
- sustainability of a wild Fraser Island dingo population
- tourism interests and management
- affects of visitation including concern over the number of 4WD's and risk of dingo strike
- capping of visitor numbers and restricting visitor access
- dingo social structure and potential impacts of culling
- dingo feeding and prey availability
- comparison of current and previous management
- genetic purity of Fraser Island dingoes and potential for breeding programs
- inappropriate visitor behaviour
- human behaviour management and education key
- potential welfare issues associated with direct management i.e. hazing
- legislative framework i.e. classification of native wildlife or pest animal.

Independence of panel members and their role in the FIDMS review was also raised, and clarified by Ecosure as follows:

- Experts selected for the workshop panel are not part of the project team undertaking the review. They were chosen for their specific capabilities to contribute important information relevant to the current strategy in relation to the key issues of dingo ecology, animal welfare, current management and research at the workshop only and have no further involvement in the review.

- This element of the workshop was included to allow for all participants to have access to as much relevant information as possible and thus assist in subsequent group discussion and individual input at focus group sessions.

## **Focus Groups**

Following facilitated discussion with the expert panel, workshop participants were invited to select a key theme and move into focus groups for further discussion. The four key themes of the FIDMS and topics for focus groups were:

1. Managing People
2. Managing Dingoes
3. Research
4. World Heritage, Natural and Cultural Values.

Multiple groups for popular themes were run concurrently, with each group consisting of between four and ten participants and a facilitator from Ecosure or the expert panel. The facilitator's role was to ensure that all participants understood the focus group process and to clarify amongst the group any issues relating to interpretation of the questions posed.

Posters were used to focus group discussion on the effectiveness of each management theme in meeting each of the current FIDMS broad objectives (human safety; dingo wellbeing and welfare; dingo conservation; visitor experience).

A question regarding the effectiveness of each objective had corresponding coloured post-it notes for participants to place in the column that best aligned with their response (very effective, effective; partly effective; not effective; don't know) (Figure 1). Post-it notes allowed for additional comment for discussion amongst the group and consideration in the FIDMS review.

The format of each poster is provided in Attachment 6.

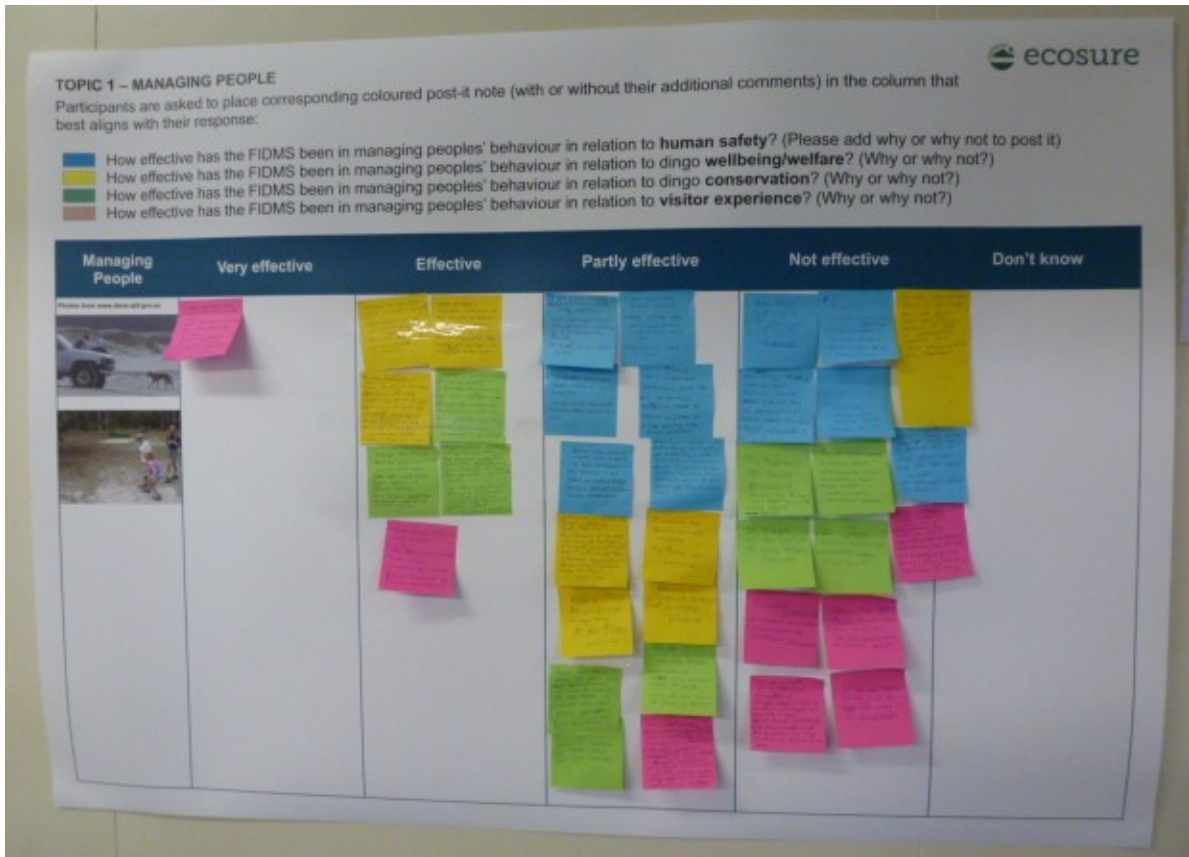


Figure 1 Example of a completed focus group poster for Managing People.

Participants were also encouraged to add feedback to posters of other themes after the session for consideration in the review.

Results from each theme are summarised below.

## Managing People

A total of 68 responses from 'managing people' focus groups were allocated as shown in Figure 2.

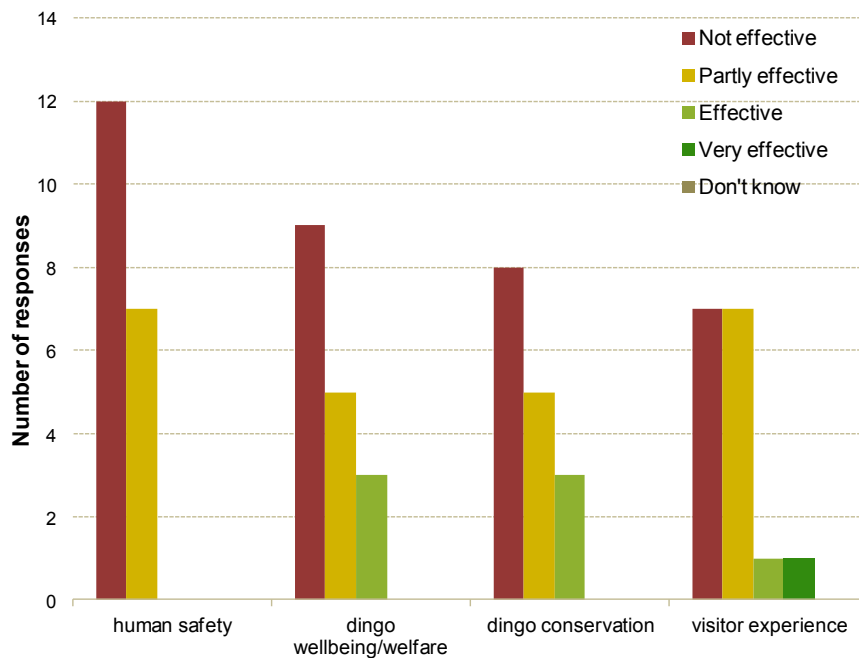


Figure 2 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at managing people in relation to each key objective

In summary, participants felt the effectiveness of the current FIDMS at managing people's behavior has been:

- not effective (63.16%) or partly effective (36.84%) in protecting human safety.
- not effective (52.94%), partly effective (29.41%) or effective (17.65%) in ensuring dingo wellbeing/welfare.
- not effective (50%), partly effective (31.25%) or effective (18.75%) in ensuring dingo conservation.
- not effective (43.75%), partly effective (43.75%), effective (6.25%) or very effective (6.25%) at providing for positive visitor experience.

## Managing Dingoes

A total of 86 responses from 'managing dingo' focus groups were allocated as shown in Figure 3.

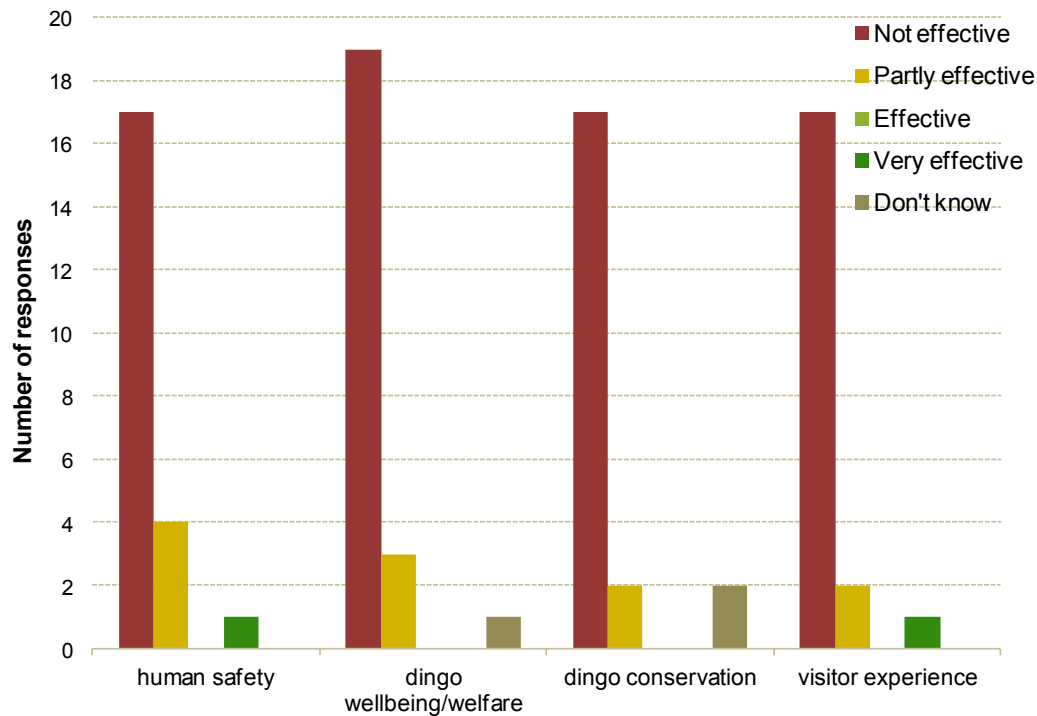


Figure 3 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at managing dingoes in relation to each key objective.

In summary, participants felt the effectiveness of the current FIDMS at managing dingo behavior has been:

- not effective (77.27%), partly effective (18.18%) or very effective (4.55%) in protecting human safety.
- not effective (82.61%) or partly effective (13.04%) in ensuring dingo wellbeing/welfare with the remainder unsure.
- not effective (80.95%) or partly effective (9.52%) in ensuring dingo conservation with the remainder unsure.
- not effective (85%), partly effective (10%) or very effective (5%) at providing for positive visitor experience.

## Research

A total of 59 responses from 'research' focus groups were allocated as shown in Figure 4.

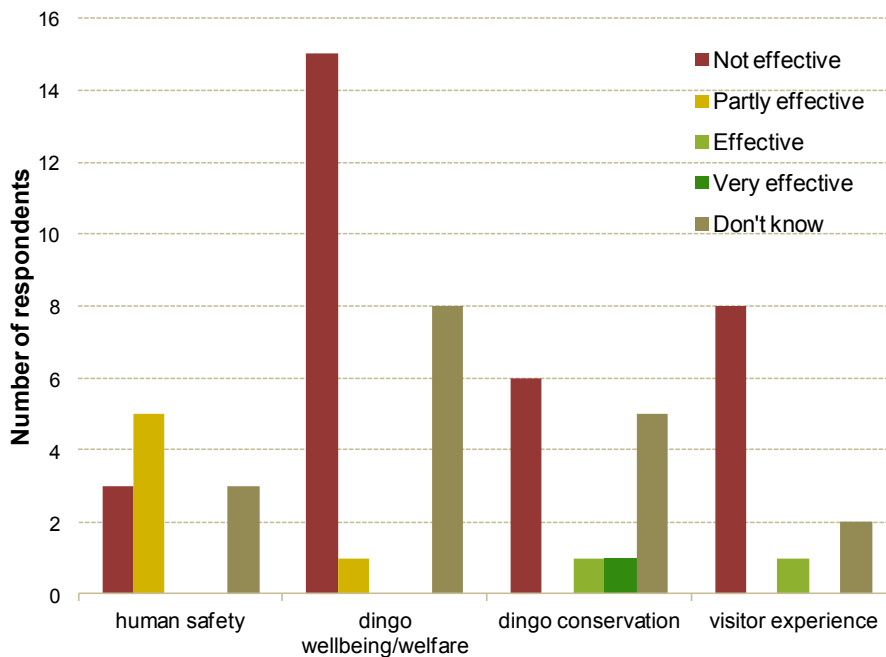


Figure 4 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at ensuring appropriate research is undertaken in relation to each key objective.

In summary, participants felt the effectiveness of the current FIDMS at ensuring appropriate research has been undertaken:

- partly effective (45.45%) or not effective (27.45%) in protecting human safety with the remainder unsure.
- not effective (62.5%) or partly effective (4.17%) in ensuring dingo wellbeing/welfare with the remainder unsure.
- not effective (46.15%) effective (7.7%) or very effective (7.7%) in ensuring dingo conservation with the remainder unsure.
- not effective (72.73%) or effective (9.09%) at providing for positive visitor experience with the remainder unsure.

## World Heritage, Natural and Cultural values

A total of 21 responses from the 'World Heritage, natural and cultural values' group were allocated as shown in Figure 5.

World Heritage, natural and cultural values could not be directly assessed against each FIDMS objective, but rather against the overall protection provided to them by the FIDMS.

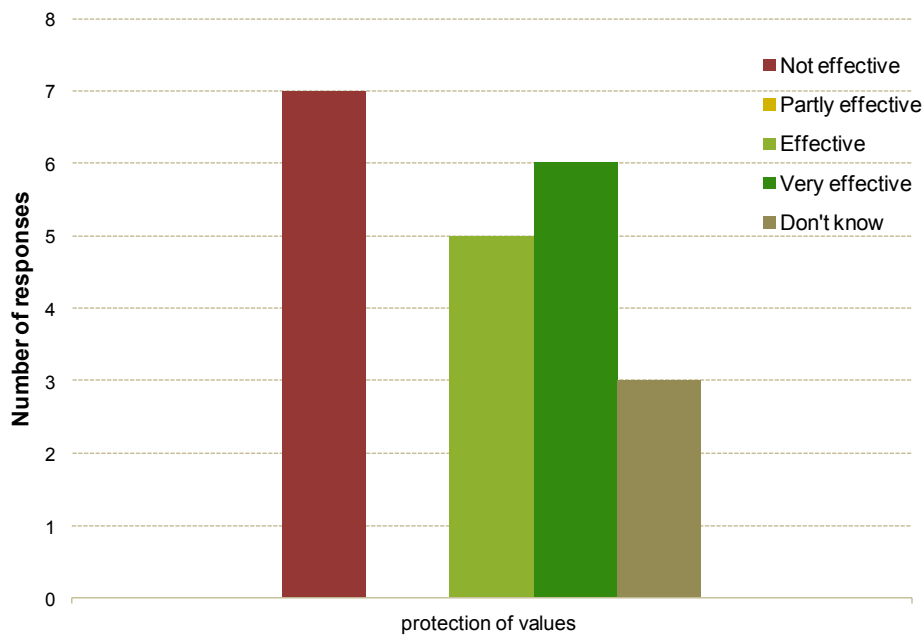


Figure 5 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at protecting World Heritage, natural and cultural values.

In summary, participants felt the effectiveness of the current FIDMS at protecting World Heritage, natural and cultural values is:

- not effective (33.33%), very effective (28.57%) or effective (23.81%) with the remainder unsure.



## FIDMS objectives

A total of 213 responses against the four key FIDMS objectives across all groups (excluding World Heritage, natural and cultural values) were allocated as shown in Figures 6 to 9.

### Human safety

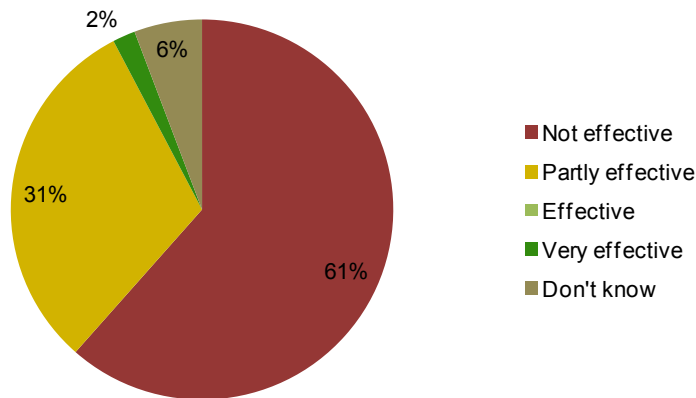


Figure 6 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at protecting human safety.

### Dingo wellbeing and welfare

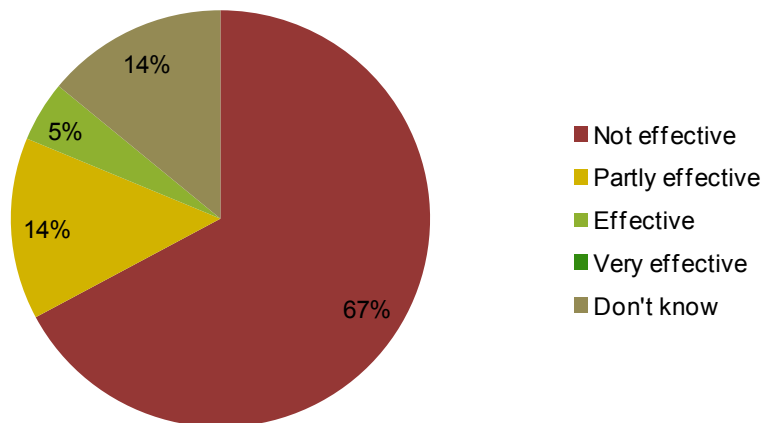


Figure 7 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at ensuring dingo wellbeing and welfare.

### Dingo conservation

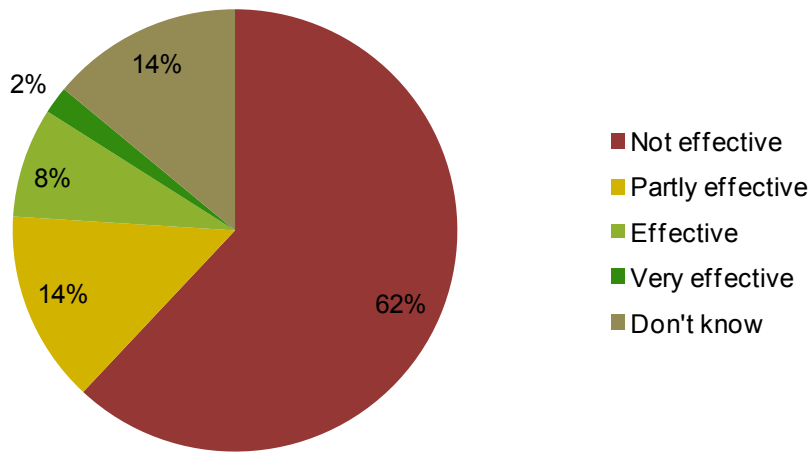


Figure 8 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at maintaining a sustainable dingo population.

### Visitor experience

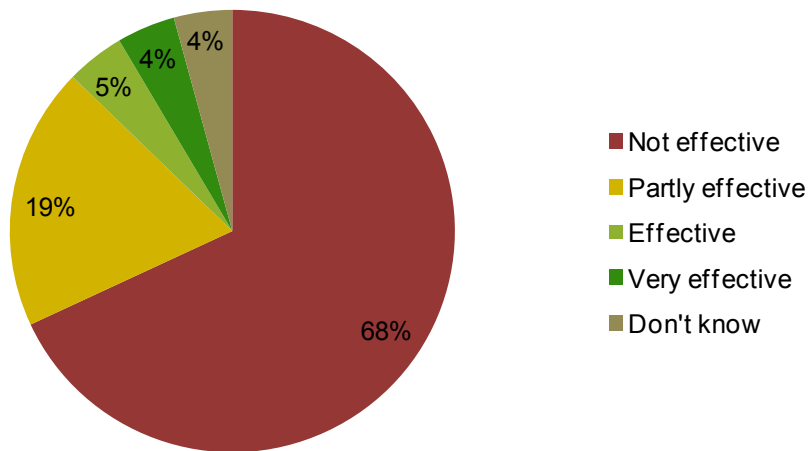


Figure 9 Responses on the effectiveness of the FIDMS at providing safe opportunities for visitors to safely view dingoes in a natural state.

## Workshop feedback

An evaluation form was provided to participants seeking comment on the effectiveness of the workshop as part of the engagement process.

In summary, from a total of 35 forms (53.8% of participants) completed:

- 41% were completely satisfied and a further 38% were mostly satisfied with the level of information provided by panellists and facilitators.
- 82% completely agreed they were able to contribute fairly and equitably to the workshop, with a further 15% mostly agreeing (one individual not satisfied).
- The amount of time available for the workshop was highlighted as both a positive (plenty of time) and a negative (some participants suggested 2-3 days would have been preferred).
- Most respondents felt they were able to effectively contribute during discussion and focus groups, with many commenting on the effectiveness of the posters during focus groups.
- Common suggestions regarding the FIDMS review and future management included improved stakeholder input (particularly from Traditional Owners and residents), less active management of dingoes, increased focus on education and human management and more research.
- Comment was also made that following clarification through panel presentations and discussion, it is apparent there is false information in the public sphere.

Overall participants felt the workshop was productive, and were positive about their feedback being considered.

Ecosure would like to thank workshop participants, and will use detailed records of the workshop in the review.