

FRIENDS OF STRADBROKE ISLAND



Established in 1988, FOSI is dedicated to the protection of the natural environment of North Stradbroke Island and its surrounding waters. FOSI also works to ensure that urban and economic development of the island is founded upon the principles of environmental protection and preservation of the unique urban characteristics of its townships.

MEMBERSHIP RATES, 2013: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00
Friends of Stradbroke Island, PO Box 167, Point Lookout QLD 4183.

Issue #67
December 2013

In this issue

Open letter.....	1
Stradbroke Island is Precious.....	2
Exhibition: <i>Falling Back to Earth</i>	3
Extension of sand mining to 2035 no certainty.....	4
CSR's pre-Enterprise vegetation variety mapping.....	5
Shearwater wreck.....	6
Microplastic - a Developing Threat to Our Oceans.....	9
Season's Greetings.....	12
Please support FOSI's ongoing work.....	12

Open letter

There has been a tremendous response to FOSI's open letter to Campbell Newman published on page two of the Courier Mail 20 November 2013.

Many other environment groups applauded it and some, including the Queensland Conservation Council published it on their websites. During the debate on the Bill, the letter was read out in Parliament by the opposition environment spokesperson, Jackie Trad, who remarked that the letter "said it all". She also tabled it for Hansard.



An unusual visitor to the island, a White Necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*). There have been a number of sightings in widespread locations on the island. Does this mean there could be more than one of these herons?

AN OPEN LETTER TO CAMPBELL NEWMAN

Stradbroke Island is precious

Dear Mr Newman,

We have some questions about your North Stradbroke Bill to extend sand mining.

Your father, as Federal Environment minister, ended sand mining on Fraser Island in 1976. He accepted that sand mining causes major permanent environmental harm and damages the tourism economy. Why won't you?

Sand mining will result in the total destruction of 14 square kilometres of forests, rich in biodiversity and scenic value, at Sibelco's Enterprise mine.

On 30 October, your department admitted that over 70% of the mine path is "undisturbed bushland". Did you know that this is home to many threatened species, including the island's genetically distinct koala and the beautiful glossy black cockatoo?

Scientists conclude that sand mining also destroys the complex structure of ancient sand dunes integral to the flow of water to the island's internationally recognised wetlands and lakes. These constitute half the island. A huge fresh water aquifer also lies beneath the whole island.

There is significant widespread opposition to your actions, including from island business owners. Your legislation will cause more community division. It will also set back reconciliation with traditional owners, who say they will challenge your Bill in the Federal Court.

Prior to the 2012 State election you promised a level playing field for mining leases on Stradbroke. Instead, your Bill shifts the goal posts for Sibelco and sacks the umpire. Elsewhere in Queensland opponents can challenge mining extensions in the Supreme Court. Your Bill abolishes this right.

Your Bill creates a special law for a private company owned by the fourth richest family in Belgium, a company which is on trial in Brisbane for illegal sand mining on Stradbroke. Why didn't you await the court's verdict, due early next year?

As you know, your Attorney-General has refused to arm the Director of Public Prosecutions with your government's files so the DPP can decide whether he agrees with the opinion of two experienced criminal lawyers (one a senior counsel) that there is a prima facie case for also charging Sibelco with stealing and fraud.

You are also aware that the Federal Environment department is investigating whether the Enterprise mine has operated without the necessary Federal Government approval since 2004. Why didn't you wait until the results of this investigation are known? What about due process?

An analysis of your Bill shows that Sibelco is getting everything it asked for and more! In 2011, Sibelco asked for an extension of mining to 2027 – you are extending it to 2035!

Mr Newman, what is going on? Why are you breaking pre-election promises and trashing the rights of Queenslanders to hand over \$1.5 Billion (Sibelco's own figure) to a wealthy Belgian family?

Your government has sacked over 20,000 public servants. Do you really think that Queenslanders will swallow your claim to be extending sand mining for 22 years to provide a "transition" for, according to the latest census, 115 mine workers?

Sibelco declared, well after the 2012 State election, that it spent \$91,840 to help your campaign in Ashgrove. But it also spent much more (undeclared) money on numerous full page newspaper ads and television advertising to peddle its PR myths.

Is there a connection between your broken promises to electors and Sibelco's political expenditure? What was discussed at your private meetings with Sibelco CEO, Campbell Jones?

You know that there have been no independent economic or environmental impact studies. And your department admitted on 30 October there has been no consultation with anyone apart from Sibelco. Do you think Queenslanders may conclude that this looks like a crooked deal?

Isn't it time there was an independent public enquiry into sand mining on North Stradbroke?



Friends of Stradbroke Island Inc.

Exhibition: *Falling Back to Earth* by Cai Guo-Qiang at GOMA

Reviewed by Julie Kearney



Falling Back to Earth, Exhibition at GOMA to 11 May 2014. Photo by Sue Ellen Carew.

'It reminds me of this past week in parliament,' joked Queensland Arts Minister Ian Walker when he viewed Cai Guo-Qiang's installation titled *Head On* at GOMA's new exhibition, *Falling Back to Earth*. This mesmerising work features 99 wolves hurling themselves at a glass wall and perhaps Mr Walker saw it as a metaphor for the proclivity of politicians to make blind and foolish decisions.

Another, equally stunning installation is *Heritage* which was inspired by the artist's visit to Blue Lake on North Stradbroke Island in 2011. In surroundings of shadowless dreamy white, 99 wild animals from all parts of the world drink peacefully from a blue lake which is surrounded by pristine white sand. On one level the installation expresses the theme behind Cai's exhibition, which according to him is 'the return to a harmonious relationship between man and nature, re-embracing the tranquillity in the landscape.'

Certainly what is conveyed by this installation, albeit disquietingly, is a sense of stepping into a lost paradise, an experience Cai obviously shared with every other visitor who sees Straddie for the first time. In Chinese numerology, however, the number 99 symbolises something incomplete, something awaiting fulfilment, and Cai conveys this in a subtle way. The animals seem at peace but of course they are not animals, being merely constructions of polystyrene under hides of unknown provenance,

and it is the unreality of the scene that gradually becomes the viewer's dominant impression. What you are looking at, the installation seems to say, is the ideal. It is not reality. As subtly insistent as the single drop of water that silently breaks the surface of the lake, the frozen tableau of beautiful endangered creatures made life-like by art confronts us with what we have lost in our environment and what we are yet to lose if we don't take action.

To judge by gallery visitors' responses, a similarly disquieting effect seems to have been produced by another installation titled *Eucalyptus* which is no more and no less than a magnificent upended gum-tree. On the wall alongside, on drawing-paper provided, one visitor's message says of the paper it was written on: 'This was a tree', while another one simply reads: 'Protect Stradbroke Island's lakes and wildlife. End sand-mining'.

An artist of international standing, Cai Guo-Qiang is no stranger to the Brisbane art scene, having produced a huge gunpowder-driven calligraphic serpent on paper in homage to the Brisbane River, as well as other installations for two Asia-Pacific Triennials. It is the mark of good art that it has the power to raise questions in the minds of its viewers and *Falling Back to Earth* is no exception to Cai's earlier work. You won't be disappointed by a trip to GOMA to ponder and wonder over his installations and what they suggest about our current relationship with our environment.

Extension of sand mining to 2035 no certainty

The passing of the Bill by parliament did not receive much publicity probably due to the sacking of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee occurring on the same day.

Importantly, under the amendments to the North Stradbroke Act, which became law on 27 November, no application for the extension of sand mining at Enterprise mine can be made before 2019. In other words, 2019 remains the end date for mining for another six years.

The key section relating to the timing of applications to extend the Enterprise mine leases is 11C of the amendment act

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/ACTS/2013/13AC063.pdf>

11C allows applications for renewal “within the renewal period”. Section 11C(3) defines the “renewal period” as, in effect, during the last year of the current term.

31 December, 2019 is the expiry date of the current terms of the Enterprise leases, including the main one, ML 1117- see Schedule 1 of the 2011 Act.

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/N/NorthStradA11.pdf>

Schedule 1 has been amended in some respects, but the 31 December, 2019 dates in column 2 were not altered. (The 31 October, 2025 dates in column 2 relate to the Vance silica mine lease.)

There is nothing to stop a future parliament amending the legislation, just as the current parliament has just amended the 2011 Act, – including by repealing the Newman amendments

altogether. If that occurred, it would mean that sand mining would end at Enterprise mine in 2019.

Apart from the obvious potential for a change of government before 2019, as members know there are a number of issues which may throw up further obstacles to the planned extension. These include:-

The current criminal charges against Sibelco have yet to be decided by the Magistrate. A verdict is expected in the first half of 2014. A guilty verdict may lead to the further charges of stealing and fraud and will throw up further questions relating to Sibelco’s fitness to mine on Stradbroke;

The native title owners, through the chair of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, Cameron Costello, have publicly stated that they intend to challenge the planned extension in the Federal Court. If a successful challenge is made, the planned extension is unlikely to proceed.

The commonwealth environment department is investigating whether the Enterprise mine commenced in 2004 (and has continued to operate since) without approval under Federal environment laws. The consequences of a finding against Sibelco are unknown.

All this means that FOSI needs to continue to point out that North Stradbroke Island deserves a better future. In recent times, committee members have noticed a change in attitude on the island. People generally had become accustomed to mining ending at Enterprise in 2019. The idea that this could be extended to 2035 is repugnant to many people who have previously not voiced their opinions, including a significant number of island business owners.



Masked Lapwing and chick on the footpath at Point Lookout.

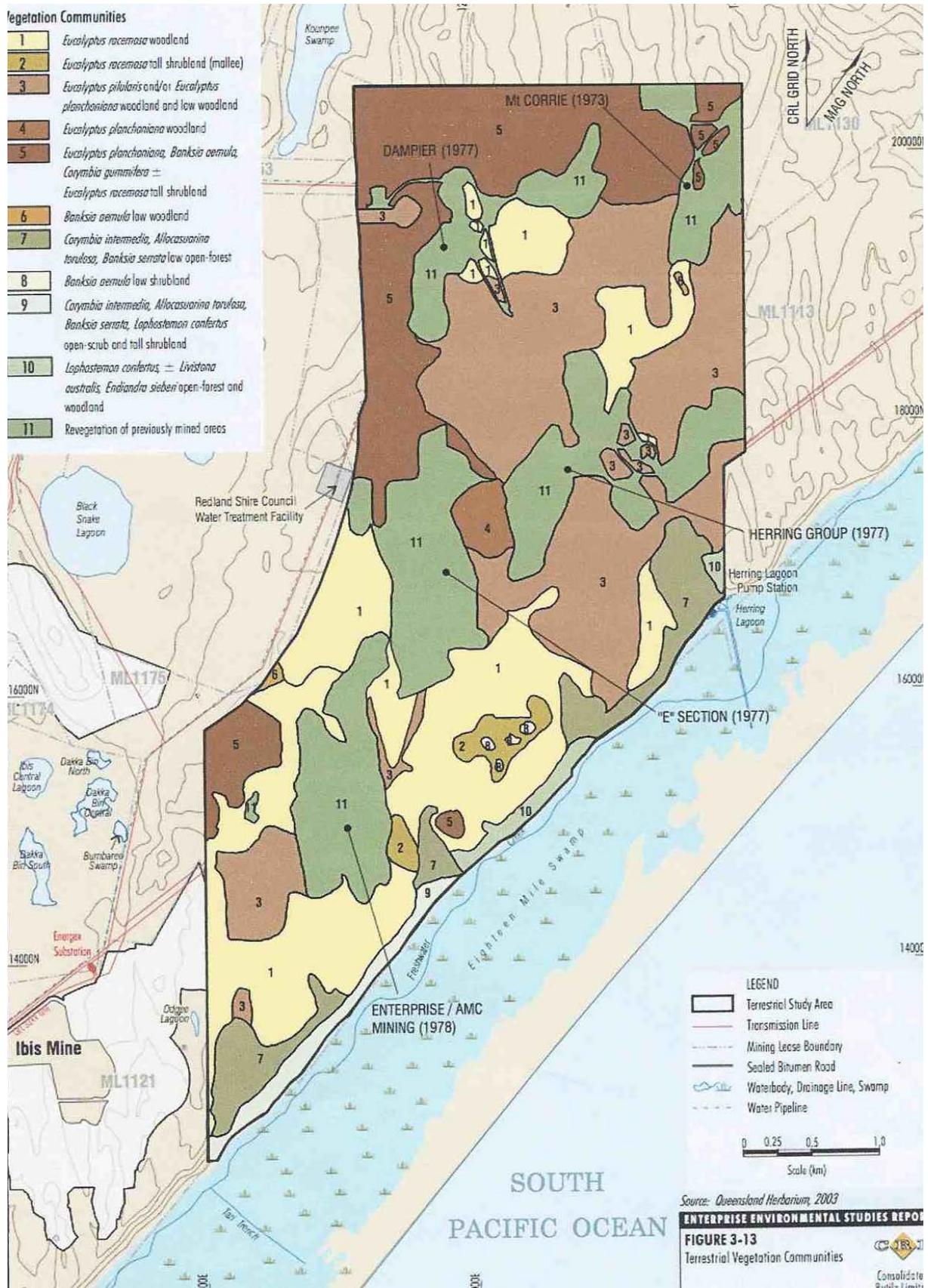
CSR's pre-Enterprise vegetation variety mapping

Map from the mining company's own pre-Enterprise mine environmental studies report, showing the rich variety of vegetation. The areas in green, numbered 11, represent the previously mined "revegetation" areas.

FOSI attached this map to its submission to the parliamentary committee which examined the Newman government's amendments to the North Stradbroke legislation.

Prior to our submission, both Sibelco and the Newman government were claiming that half of the Enterprise mine ore body had been mined previously.

After we lodged our submission, the government department advising the committee finally admitted, in evidence to the parliamentary committee, that Sibelco's own map showed that just over 70% of the area was "undisturbed" vegetation.



Shearwater wreck

Once again we are seeing the sad sight of many dead and dying birds on Straddie beaches. They are the short tailed shearwaters also known as mutton birds.

More than 3500 birds were blown up on shore this year and started crashing on October 7, buffeted by strong easterly winds from a cold front out to sea.

The birds die from exhaustion and malnutrition because their store of energy is depleted after a long migration from Siberia.

Short tailed shearwaters are pelagic, that is, they live their life in the open ocean and are a migratory species. There are approximately 23 million in the world, breeding on the Australian islands during the warmer months, mainly in Tasmania and islands in the Bass Straight.

The shearwater is the most abundant Australian seabird. There are about 285 colonies in south-east Australia with 18 million birds arriving in Tasmania each year.

More than 200,000 shearwater chicks are harvested commercially under licence in Tasmania each year, prized for their down and feathers, oil and flesh. The oil is used as an additive for racehorse food, down and feathers for pillows and the preserved meat for human consumption, which apparently resembles mutton.

Related to the petrel, they have adapted to life on the ocean by having webbed feet for swimming, a hooked beak for fishing, long and narrow wings for efficient high speed gliding, and a wingspan of one metre. Weighing about 500g, they are one of the few birds

with a well developed sense of smell. They were first recorded by members of Captain Cook's third expedition on the Discovery sailing through the Arctic and were named for their graceful shearing flight.

Shearwaters start breeding between three and five years of age. In early September/October they meet with their chosen mate and begin to prepare and tidy up old burrows that they reuse year after year, or else excavate new ones.

They mate inside the metre-long burrows and retain their chosen partner for life. They leave the colony to feed, allowing themselves to build up fat. The female then lays a single white egg. An entire colony lays its eggs over a period of two weeks so that the chicks all hatch at the same time, enabling them to start their migration in unison.

Both birds incubate the egg, and the chick hatches after 53 days. Both parents feed the baby, which gorges itself on regurgitated food, and it quickly becomes twice the size of a parent.

In April the adults depart, leaving the downy chick behind. From this time to early May, the chick does not eat, rapidly loses weight and acquires its flight feathers, then moves closer to the shore and starts exercising its wings.

Two to three weeks after the parents leave, the young birds start their amazing migratory flight, unassisted by the experienced birds. These birds have an average life span of 15-19 years but some can live to 38 years.

Between June and August the birds fly north along the western Pacific to the Arctic and Bering Sea to feed.



Photo by Robert Ashdown

They return south between October and January, along the east coast of Australia, travelling 15,000 km in each direction and, incredibly, some do the whole journey in six weeks.

By the time the birds arrive back in Australia they have expended most of their energy reserves on the journey, losing half their body weight. They may meet with storms and unusual sea surface temperatures, which can affect their main food source of krill, squid and fish. They dive 10 metres to capture this food supply, but when it is unavailable, quickly become exhausted. There is concern being voiced by scientists that seasonal variation due to climate change may have affected the availability of food sources.

Southerly gales make it impossible for the birds to fly on in this weakened state and so they are blown and washed ashore. Sometimes live birds are washed up but are too exhausted to head back out to sea. The elderly and young birds are the most vulnerable.

This was the fate of the many birds found on our beaches.

The Department of Environment and Heritage is urging people not to handle the dead or dying birds as a precaution. The Pelican and Seabird Rescue asks that you call them on 0404 118 301, however the University of Queensland's Moreton Bay Research Station is of the opinion that it is best to leave them alone as they are notoriously difficult to rehabilitate. If you see that the bird has a numbered metal band around its leg, please contact the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme on (02) 6274 2407.

A special thanks to Mike Hines for his help with information and photos, Emma Lewis at the UQ Research Station, Dunwich and to Robert Ashdown and island photographers for recording the recent events.

Article by Angela McLeod





Microplastic - a Developing Threat to Our Oceans

Scientific studies in Australian waters and in the seas around Britain have found that microplastic concentrations are increasing and showing evidence of effects on ocean ecosystems.



*Lugworms are widely found across the whole of the north Atlantic, living in burrows in the sand of beaches.
Photograph: Alamy*

Australian scientists from the University of Western Australia set up ocean net stations to trap plastic fragments, siting these nets around most of the circumference of the continent and across to Fiji. Results have ascertained an average of 4256.4 pieces, at a median size of 2.8mm, per square kilometer with much higher concentrations contributing to this average coming from nets positioned around the populated areas of Sydney and Brisbane. Unfortunately these results put Stradbroke Island in a hot spot for plastic.

Studies undertaken by scientists from Plymouth and Exeter Universities, on the English south coast, involved investigating the effect of ingestion of microplastics on lugworms, an indicator species at the bottom of the food chain. An important food source for fish and seabirds, lugworms also act in a similar way to terrestrial earthworms by turning over and oxygenating the upper layers of sand to keep the sediment healthy for other sea creatures and microorganisms.

Sluggishness with less energy for feeding and reproduction were found to be among deleterious health effects on the worms by scientists from Exeter University. The study from Plymouth has established that ingesting microplastics transfers pollutants to the worms, clearly affecting their health. Plastic particles have a propensity to attract pollutants or are coated



*Pre-production plastic pellets, or 'nurdles' on the windward side of South Sokos Island, Hong Kong.
Photograph: Alex Hofford/EPA*

with them in the manufacturing process. Pollutants found include hydrocarbons, antimicrobials, flame-retardants and dyes.

Common materials found in the oceans, in "micro" form, are polyethylene, polyethylene terephthalate and PVC or polystyrene. Single use packaging is estimated to make up 80% of the plastic breaking down into smaller and smaller pieces. But other sources of microplastic include the raw material melted down for plastic manufacture, little balls called "nurdles", also used for exfoliating beads in face and bodywash products and surprisingly fibres from synthetic textiles like polyester which apparently can release up to 2000 tiny fibres per garment each time they are washed.

So far, the emphasis on plastic control in the sea has been on the danger of larger plastic items like plastic bags and fishing line choking, obstructing and entangling birds, turtles and other sea life, but now the research is indicating that microplastic is having an impact at the base of the food chain, on the creatures that form an important link to keeping the ocean ecosystems healthy. These studies have opened the way for closer scrutiny of the problems we are creating by using enormous amounts of plastic in our everyday lives and the need for international regulation of plastic disposal on land and sea.

Article by Sue Ellen Carew

WANTED

for crimes against Straddie wildlife.



Fox photographed on Sibelco's southern sand mining lease. Sand Times 2013

*Foxes are increasing in number all over Straddie.
They are declared feral pests and were introduced into
Australia in the 1850s for hunting.*

Now they are the hunters of our native wildlife.

*Without serious fox control efforts, the growing number of foxes
will bring disastrous ecological consequences to the island.
We need to protect our endangered nesting turtles, bandicoots,
koala and wallaby joeys and remarkable birds.*



Foxes don't belong on Straddie!

**If you see a fox anywhere on the Island call the
Redland City Council on 3829 8999**



Fox Poster distributed by FOSI - Estimated number of foxes over 1000. So far the Redland Council Feral Animal Controller has caught 130 foxes, 10 cats and 43 Indian Mynahs. Congratulations Michael and the Redland City Council!



Noisy Friarbirds locked in combat in Point Lookout suburbia.

Sand mining damages Stradbroke.

Koala habitat, old tree hollows and complex ecology wiped out by mines.



Mined since 2004 without Federal Government approval!

No Fox control on mining leases
Foxes threatening native wildlife.



Fox photographed at mine lease by Sibelco.
Cameras don't stop foxes.



Drowned bushland, diesel spill, land slips, off lease impacts!

Below, about 100 metres of steel cable used in sand mining years ago recently exposed on Main Beach.



At risk ancient and beautiful lakes and precious water supply from aquifer.

Friends of Stradbroke Island





Season's Greetings

and a

Happy New Year to all FOSI members!



Little Wattle Bird on a beautiful red flowering Eucalypt in a Point Lookout garden.

Please support FOSI's ongoing work.

FOSI makes a high priority of continuing its public information and education campaigns to highlight the increasing environmental damage caused by land clearing, sand mining, hydrological changes, plastic and feral animals on Stradbroke Island. Please support our efforts.

Thank you very much to all the generous members who have made donations.

All donations to the Environment Fund are tax deductible.

If you wish to make a donation by bank transfer please put your name on the transaction and if possible follow up with an email to our Membership Secretary Edith McPhee (emcphee@westnet.com.au) to let her know you have made a donation. Receipts will be mailed to donors.

FOSI Environment Fund
BSB 124029, Acc 216454