



NEW YEAR'S NEWS 2025

DREDGING !!!

of 100 metres' length of Stony Creek nearest the boat ramp.



Stony Creek's lower reach
looking NW

opens into the Hinchinbrook Passage shallows.

Marina irreversibly defunct. Mud hiding buried concrete with piles visible but unusable.

Private berths in use along Stony Creek.

South of Stony Creek thriving mangroves in Hinchinbrook Passage.



Boat ramp area

Looking SE

Pontoon along boat ramp

Large plastic bladder

Banded area



Looking West

Bruce Highway

Muddy Creek

Stony Creek

Internal road with bridge over Stony Creek

Boat ramp & pontoons

National parks come up trumps as 4WD rally tracks

Four-wheel drive operators are using Queensland's national parks as rally tracks for heavy 4WD vehicles and trailers.

In late 2024, a TV Program featured rallying on Fraser Island National Park, with the express intention of repeating these extremely damaging heavy-vehicle games "moving north". LOOK OUT for these heavy-vehicle rallies coming your way, *in your national park!*

Perish the thought: four-wheel-drive rallies on Hinchinbrook Island National Park? -

But we can't "perish the thought" – it's already escaped.

If you don't want Hinchinbrook Island National Park to be trashed like Fraser Island National Park:

WRITE NOW to Minister Andrew Powell and SPEAK to your local MP.

Hinchinbrook Island National Park as cash cow

Cardwell accommodation, food and fuel businesses have benefitted from the strictly low-level commercial visitation by permit that pertained to the end of 2023; when the number of walkers on the Thorsborne Trail was limited to 40 at any one time, spread out over 4-5 days of self-reliant walking. Government management has now overturned that acceptable regime, by promoting limitless levels of visitation. The government is already deliberately degrading the landscape that is home to the wild animals of Hinchinbrook Island. The international reputation of its exceptional landscapes and biodiversity, and the self-reliant wilderness trail itself, are already suffering.

Cardwell businesses generally have benefitted from visitation on Hinchinbrook Island National Park without destroying the source of that income. Others however, including some "Port Hinchinbrook" block owners, deserve the name "scammer". Along with Nick Dametto MP, they are lobbying government departments and politicians to vastly increase visitor numbers on Hinchinbrook Island National Park. Simple logic and good faith should have ruled out the building of tracks and clearing of trees, because such obvious reconstruction of the land is plainly incompatible with "preservation of the natural condition of the area" (*Nature Conservation Act 1992*).

How can we ensure this travesty of management is corrected? Will you talk to your local MP?

Write a letter expressing your sorrow and anger?

Complain to the Environment Minister?

Say NO to leases on national parks!

Leases are contracts that sell the “use rights” of the land leased. No exposition of conditions, “imposed” but unenforceable, can change that fact.

Since 1997, ASH has continued the historical work of FOH – eg, ridding the island of various residues of European infrastructure developments. Two long term tourism leases were revoked in 2019. It’s up to us, speaking clearly to our political representatives, to make sure there will be no more leases – starting with our special case, Hinchinbrook Island National Park.

Intrinsic worth or “ecotourism”?

ASH opposes the government’s “ecotourism” plan because, first and foremost, national parks are for the “preservation of the natural condition of the area” including (of course) its biodiversity. This particular “area” (Hinchinbrook Island National Park) also happens to be within the *Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*, to whose Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) it contributes greatly.

To safeguard natural biodiversity, the only purpose of national parks, visitation in national parks *must* be limited to “appreciation of the area for its intrinsic value.”

ASH does not support the views of those so-called conservation groups which claim that “with the right focus and community backing it [tourism] could have enormous benefits for conservation on a wide scale”. Such statements have neither scientific nor logical basis; yet are foisted on a gullible public to justify proposals to hand over national parks - a public good - for private profiteering.

No national park ever “needs” recreational visitation. As Margaret Thorsborne AO so often said: “*You don’t need to visit; it is enough to know it is there*”. She was referring to our need for national parks to exist as a vital source of the natural biodiversity without which our species will not survive.

National parks do, however, need professional visitation (ie by rangers and scientists) to ensure they are kept free of invasive species and disease.

And in case you were wondering: there is no evidence whatsoever that human recreational visitation or adventure sports improve the quality or contribute to the maintenance of national parks.

National parks are essential to human health.

National Parks provide intrinsic health-giving properties - *by simply existing*.

Their major health-giving impact, arising from their ever-evolving biodiversity, is now uniquely important to humanity's future.

At a personal level, the psychological benefits of spending time in natural surroundings are well understood and are particularly relevant to urban and suburban planning.

There is no scientific basis, however, for the notion that humans who are suffering psychological ill-health can benefit from nature only by immersion in a national park. Psychological health benefits can be gained from keeping and tending pot plants.

Example: The hospice at The Townsville Hospital: One side of this long low building, sited to face a much-disparaged creek, is entirely glass, with wide-opening glass doors. A patient was heard asking (on separate occasions) to have the curtains on the glass wall, and the glass door, left open; *expressly to see and smell the bush, hear the birds, and feel the breeze.*

Commodifying national parks detracts from their dedicated purpose.

Branding (greenwashing) as "eco-tourism" does not change the reality of the adverse outcomes for biodiversity arising from recreational visitation.

***Tourism** is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes (Wiki).*

***Egotourism** encapsulates the practice of traveling primarily to gain social media validation through photographs and posts (Wiki).*

***Ecotourism: An oxymoron?** This is "responsible" travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education (TIES, 2015) (Wiki).*

Examples of Tourism and egotourism are easy enough to find; but is "responsible travel" practised anywhere in Australia? *Does anyone pay the actual carbon costs of travel to and from the site of the tourist attraction?* How could that be achieved? Could a realistic ecotourism levy be mandated?

ASH opposes any resort development in or adjacent to national parks.

Resorts must be located outside of national parks and their buffer zones, where resort activities cannot dominate or monopolise access to the national park.

The siting of tourism resorts is unrelated to wildlife corridors.

Corridors are a construction of last resort, when habitat has been disrupted and fragmented by human interference to the point that emergency remedial effort is required to preserve biodiversity as threatened species.

Rehabilitate or regenerate? MAD or LAC?

Rehabilitation in national parks must follow accidental or deliberate damage, including storm and fire damage.

Damaged areas within (and adjacent to) national parks must be rehabilitated. There is no logic or morality in further damaging part of a national park because that part is already damaged and in need of rehabilitation.

A damage-and-repair cycle popularised as “regenerative tourism” is reminiscent of earlier visitation justifications such as Maximum Acceptable Damage (MAD) and Limits to Acceptable Change (LAC). MAD and LAC are better suited to farming.

MAD, LAC and regenerative tourism can only contribute to the degradation of national parks. Any tourism or other activities that intrinsically cause damage to a national park must be ceased, not accommodated by repeated episodes of repair.

Ancestry and heritage

No other ENGO is likely to have ASH’s long ancestral connection with Queensland’s national parks and Hinchinbrook Island (also Fraser Island and Stradbroke Island). It began with my father Oswald Moorhouse Higginbottom (Binna Burra), my three maternal uncles Clelland who, along with Romeo Lahey, founded the National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ); and Arthur and Margaret Thorsborne A.O. for whom the self-reliant wilderness trail on Hinchinbrook Island is named.

Friends of Hinchinbrook (FOH), the Thorsborne Trust, Margaret Thorsborne and Margaret Moorhouse were instrumental in the national park gazettal of 180 ha of seafront melaleuca habitat (critical habitat for the endangered mahogany glider) running south from Oyster Point. Keith Williams had a longstanding lease application over the northernmost section, the 60 ha of USL 33.

Margaret Moorhouse noticed that someone had “got at” the new draft Critical Habitat map between designation and printing, such that the *critical habitat* designation of the northernmost land (USL Lot 33) had been removed. Having been leaked the news of Keith

Williams' lease application, the Thorsborne Trust also applied for a lease, thus forcing a departmental decision.

Minister Rod Welford acted quickly and cleverly. In one move he legitimised the unlawful removal of critical habitat designation (thus avoiding a bureaucratic brawl) and saved USL 33's coastal woodland from destruction: he refused both lease applications and reclassified the critical habitat as national park. No-one could legitimately complain about this outcome.

Looking at the map again, Margaret Moorhouse cheekily asked for the next hundred-odd hectares to the south, now comprising a gap between two national parks, to be added to the national park land. And so it was done. Rod Welford MP monitored the progress of this tenure conversion, for the eight years it took to eventuate.

Below – 1997 – taking back the marine park for the people



Professor Frank Talbot (deceased) at his coming-out (above ^) as a conservation activist

Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook (ASH) continues to stand up for principles by which the natural environment may be properly respected and protected long-term. This sometimes leads us to positions that differ from those espoused by other conservation groups.

Example: In 2022, ASH participated in a process which was supposedly a joint response with other Conservation groups, the submitted version of which did not reflect ASH's advice or concerns regarding tourism on Hinchinbrook Island or in Queensland's protected estate generally. ASH immediately forwarded dissenting comments, based on our very long personal, professional, family and organisational history as ASH and Friends of Hinchinbrook Inc. (FOH) (wound up).s