



ACTION: Bob Irwin.

Dingoes must be fed: Irwin

CAPPING tourist numbers on Fraser Island or establishing dingo feeding stations in restricted spots are unpopular options that must be considered to save its dingo population, according to wildlife campaigner Bob Irwin.

"We have a magnificent World Heritage-listed island with a second-class management program for the last stronghold of purebred dingoes. It's our responsibility to fix it," he said.

He said reduced dingo food sources and limited scavenging areas were affecting the animals' health. "People seem to forget that dingoes are predators. Predators that are starving get grumpy," he said.

The dwindling koala population is another of Bob's wildlife priorities in the state's south-east as he carries on the legacy of his son, Croc Hunter Steve Irwin.

Today is the fourth anniversary of Steve's death, aged 44. "We need more people working on the health and numbers of koalas because we're already seeing localised extinction," Bob said. Bob said the issue was much broader than the "bandaid" of buying land as reserve. "It is possible to have development and save koalas at the same time but we need much more planning," he said.

Bob remembers Croc Hunter on anniversary: starts Page 39



TEAM PLAYER: Sophie Wheeler has been named Queensland Army Challenge Player of the year.

PHOTO: JASON DOUGHERTY/193510C

Amazing Sophie abides by the rules

By **BIANCA CLARE**
bianca.clare@scnews.com.au

WHEN it comes to Australian Rules, Sophie Wheeler's family does not agree on much at all.

Dad likes the Carlton Blues, her brother supports the West Coast Eagles and she carries the torch for the Sydney Swans.

But there is one thing they all see eye to eye on – Sophie's on-field talent.

The 13-year-old has been named Queensland Army Challenge Player of the year for her courage and teamwork.

She will now get to enjoy an awesome "footy weekend" in Melbourne, complete with a training session with Glenn Archer.

While Sophie is "not quite sure" why she was nominated and why the judges selected her over hundreds of other entrants, her dad and the local club, Nambour and Hinterland, can.

"She is pretty amazing," her dad Steve Wheeler said.

"There are only maybe half a dozen other girls in the club. Sophie shows a lot of initiative. I am very proud."

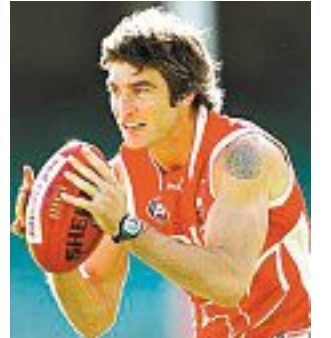
Sunshine Coast AFL member Rohan Briggs said despite her quiet nature, Sophie was a pretty tough kid.

"She runs hard and takes a lot of hits but keeps going," he said.

"Sophie finished third in the best and fairest this year.

"I would say she is the best girl in that age division."

Sophie said her love for the game began at an early age when her brother picked up



FINALS BATTLE: Brett Kirk.

the ball.

Despite being surrounded by boys and having a tiny frame, she doesn't feel uncomfortable.

"I used to play soccer, so being one of the only girls is no big deal," she said.

"There have been no injuries yet."

Sophie said she loved playing Australian Rules simply because it was good exercise and fun.

"I actually did not know about the award until I got an email," she said.

"My strength is kicking but I would like to improve my running."

"I want to keep playing while I am allowed and then I will see what happens from there."

When the Swans and the Blues battle for a position in the finals this weekend, you'll know where to find the Wheelers. They'll be in front of the TV.

Sophie's favourite player, Sydney Swans skipper Brett Kirk, will be playing what could be his final game.

But Sophie hopes she will see her Swans go through to the grand final.

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