

ATTENTION: Rob Hansen, Research Director, Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee

Submission to the inquiry into the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Another Act Amendment Bill 2013

This submission is made on behalf of Bruce Martin and Susan Martin

Postal Address: [REDACTED], POINT LOOKOUT 4183, Queensland

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The content of this submission is provided by our long involvement as members of Friends Of Stradbroke Island Inc. and Stradbroke Island Management Organisation Inc. These two associations have acted as environmental watchdogs on North Stradbroke Island; SIMO Inc. was formed in 1978 to campaign (successfully) against the building of a bridge to the island; FOSI Inc. was formed to protect the island beaches, successfully in the case of Cylinder Beach, against over- development of the built environment. Both successfully challenged the over-development of the redevelopment of the Point Lookout Hotel which matter was decided in the Federal High Court of Australia.

Both FOSI Inc. and SIMO Inc. were written into the Environment Authority of each sand mining lease held by mining companies on NSI as environmental stakeholders since 2001 and each has played a very active role in reducing the significant environmental impact to the island, caused by sand mining over the past sixty odd years, by reporting incidents on and off lease to the relevant authority as in the Environment Protection Agency and Department of Environment and Resource Management, making the company responsible for the damages and the repair. In 2001 the EA required stakeholder input into Environmental Reports, Plan Of Operations (mine path), baseline studies, land form criteria; we successfully lobbied the EPA for independent environmental audits of sand mining impact on active leases. The management committees of both organisations have been involved continually in regular meetings with the successive mining companies on NSI until Sibelco Australia acquired the total number of leases, at which time this foreign (Belgium) owned, private company has ceased contact, refusing site visits and non-reporting to the island communities and the general public, either through Environmental Reports or Plan Of Ops.

Susan Martin has served on the management committees of both organisations as Honorary Secretary and she, along with committee members, has been responsible for authorship of many reports and letters to the three levels of government addressing the longstanding significant environmental impact caused by sand mining on North Stradbroke Island. Her involvement in associated meetings would be recorded in the Minutes of each archive. She has been involved in providing relevant material to the Environmental Defenders Office.

Susan Martin has represented FOSI and SIMO at Queensland National Parks and Queensland Conservation levels and in discussion with Australian Conservation Foundation.

Since the early 1980s Susan Martin has been witness to many of the sand mining environmental impacts which have occurred on lease on NSI, in most instances causing irreparable damage.

These would include: flooding of a melaleuca forest on the Gordon lease, above Swan Bay; over-pumping (over many years) of the RAMSAR water-body Eighteen Mile Swamp, south of Palm valley, causing extensive melaleuca colonizing in the swamp with reduction in the peat levels leading to loss of indigenous species necessary for safe passage of migratory birds; the collapse of the large dune at Bayside (as the dredge worked too close) which resulted in the death of many plant species both in Moreton Bay and Little Canalpan Creek reducing fish stocks and deprivation of feeding areas for waders, migratory birds; the total loss of several perched lakes including Lakes Kounpee and Native Companion, in the first instance due to the dredge “cutting the corner” of its mine path and the second where pumping for the dredge pond removed a plug – the death of the water body and its ecological environment is pitiful to see, causing death to birds, fish, dragon flies, marsupials and reptiles; the attempted return to pre-mining land form on Ibis and Alpha leases resulted in a dune running contrary to its pre-existing orientation resulting in poor rehabilitation of large trees and under-story repair with no assistance from stored top soils which were lost in the dune’s poor relocation; the Enterprise mine path went below sea-level as it worked inside of the large escarpment which both forms and protects the important RAMSAR listed Eighteen Mile Swamp resulting in flooding along the eastern side of the scarp, again causing colonizing of plants in the swamp itself which impacts markedly in its ability to remain healthy; a diesel spill at the Amity lease went undetected for so long the repair of this country is on-going after ten years of pumping. The list could go on ...

We would like to object to the lack of consultation with the island’s environmental stakeholders and, with the Quandamooka people, demonstrated by the Newman Government and to the inordinate haste in which your Parliamentary Committee is attempting to gather the facts necessary to support these amendments. There has been no discussion with the public whose livelihood they will affect long term; the Indigenous Land Use Agreement is not being respected in upholding Native Title rights, even after their long fought battle. I have a letter from the Premier’s Department, dated August 2013, in which SIMO Inc. is assured by the Premier that consultation would take place and the ILUA upheld. Not so is the case. Indeed, your committee’s Minutes from the meeting 23 October 2013 show the real concerns a committee member, Ms Jackie Trad (Member for South Brisbane), put forward about government bias toward Sibelco Australia which, as she succinctly put it, “has everything it wants in the Bill and the altered Environment Authority”. Even the relevant maps provided at your meeting were provided by Sibelco, she remonstrated. Ms Trad’s remonstrance would be correctly placed by many, given an opportunity to appear before the Parliamentary Committee.

Sarah Martin ran an online petition to seek public opinion in the worth of this Bill .There was time only for it to canvass over seven short days before it had to be closed to allow time for over two hundred signatures accompanying the petition to meet the rather absurd, hasty closure for submissions Monday 28 October 2013 with a hearing roster date in the Parliament Wednesday 30 October 2013. The CEO of QYAC was unable to meet this deadline after she (Shyane) received the petition on the day Sarah Martin had to close it; Shyane indicated she and, many of her people, would have been eager to sign. Sarah has reassured her a second petition will follow IF THERE IS TIME again and QYAC will be informed immediately it is online.

Your committee’s inquiry process has been inadequate; possibly through no fault of your own other than you have been required by the government to move with undue haste which has not allowed for a

proper submission process; your admission, at the Thursday 24 October 2013 with Quandamooka at the Marine Research Station, DUNWICH, (which Susan Martin attended) that this government does not allow for public consultation is alarming and grossly unfair to those people who do not have the resources to hastily prepare an email submission. The above mentioned petition delay with QYAC a question in point.

Our association with North Stradbroke Island goes back to 1972. It is our considered opinion the island is more valuable to Queenslanders retained forever as a natural resource for tourism and recreation and education and its high scientific bio-diversity. This opinion includes that of the island communities which are more than ready to transit into economy and island business based on the island's environmental wealth not that destroyed for quick profits by a privately owned Belgium mining company which likelihood of rehabilitation is questionable. To date the company is many hectares over the 450 ha allowance of the EA.

Cameron Costello, Elder and Quandamooka spokesperson, recently said: the time for sand mining is in the past and my people want to move to a new future which looks after our country. We are ready. (Quandamooka Media release August 2013).

The government is incorrect in stating the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011* does not allow time to phase-out mining and transition the economy of NSI towards nature based recreation, tourism and education. The Quandamooka people are involved already and a small number only continue to work in mining; it is unfortunate, though understandable, the government turns to one Elder for an opinion. Without disrespect, for over forty years I have heard Auntie Margaret Iselin hold her view that 'only sand mining gives jobs to her people'. She is wrong. A small number of Indigenous people work for the mines now; those given the present day choices have found work elsewhere which has seen the younger people move off island to do so, just like anyone else, completing apprenticeships and courses to do so. This is a healthy advancement and one strongly supported by the late Oodgeroo Noonukul/Kath Walker.

Two major symposiums have been held on NSI about the island, involving the Royal Society, many scientists, historians, geologists, the Queensland Herbarium and Stradbroke Island Management Organisation Inc. in two publications of the presented papers. SIMO Inc. has its own well known publication, *North Stradbroke Island* 2nd Edition (revised 2004) Ellie Durbidge, Jeanette Covacevich. SIMO has been an active body fighting to maintain the island's special qualities. Stradbroke remains an extensive wallum area that is accessible to Brisbane. Its flora and fauna are diverse and scientifically significant. It has unequalled educational potential. SIMO hopes that future planning will acknowledge and safeguard these qualities.

Professor Hugh Possingham, University of Queensland, conducted research on NSI of its bio-diversity places this as one of the highest in the Southern Hemisphere; this is well supported by several other published papers. Cathy Stephens work for the Queensland Herbarium on NSI plants has listed many rare, endangered species in a recent Herbarium publication. Frank Carrick and Bill Ellis (U of Q koala unit) have published on the island's iconic koala and the rare, shy Glossy Black Cockatoo is threatened in a constantly moving sand mining landscape which has taken few survivors over too many years of purging the Southern Hemisphere's second largest sand island of its heavy minerals.

Susan Martin, in her capacity as an Honorary Secretary of both SIMO Inc. and FOSI Inc., has worked with hydrologist Errol Stock toward preservation of the island's precious aquifer and water bodies over many years. Stock continues his island research with the real fear of damage to the aquifer, from deep dredge sand mining, hastening the advancement of the salt water/fresh water inter-face which will cripple permanently the island environment.

Long term sustainable jobs associated with nature tourism are likely to be sacrificed if damage to Stradbroke's environment continues for the sake of short term jobs in mining. The NSIPS and Another Act Amendment Bill 2013 will lead to loss of employment opportunities in the long term not a gradual transition as claimed.

Bruce and Susan Martin do not generally support the Bill and what it seeks to do; our opinions are not given lightly or without in-depth consideration of the many island issues. During a life-time we have been involved in public discussion and debate about the interconnected issues of mining, Aboriginal land rights and the environment on NSI. The associations of which we are members have had successive legal matters heard in every level of Justice; we have supported these matters. We take offence the North Stradbroke Island Bill fails to restore the rights of Queenslanders to object to a mining extension and challenge a renewal in Court. That right is available to us under the Mineral Resources Act which applies everywhere else in Queensland. It is wrong, that Sibelco has been given preferential treatment by the government by way of a special law that bypasses the Mineral Resources Act. And, as a further matter, it is inappropriate that favours are being granted to a company currently facing criminal charges in the Queensland Magistrates Court. The Bill should not be put into the Parliament for consideration whilst this serious charge is attended to by the Magistrate's Court in November 2013. Sibelco has been fined heavily earlier this year for delaying the hearing and it is unlikely the Court will tolerate a further delaying tack by Sibelco's legal team.

In conclusion, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit a submission to your Parliamentary Committee and in the hope you will have sufficient time to read the content and expeditiously convey our concerns to the government Wednesday 30 October 2013. No doubt those with conflicting interests about land use on North Stradbroke Island will continue to put their arguments. Today there is greater awareness of the value of protecting the island as a rare 'natural' place close to Brisbane. We hope you have gained a better understanding of its real worth through our experience gained over a long period of contact and involvement.

Yours faithfully

Bruce Martin

Susan Martin

Sunday 27 October 2013.