



Andrew Laming
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BOWMAN

Friday, 25 October 2013

Mr Ian Rickuss MP
Chair
Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Chair,

I have represented the North Stradbroke Island (NSI) community as the Federal MP for the electorate of Bowman since 2004. The [North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Another Act Amendment Bill 2013](#) will boost economic confidence on the island and secure NSI's future for a generation.

Given the significant impact closure of sandmining operations will have on the NSI community, it is imperative that governments transition to a post-sandmining economy in a considered, strategic and sensitive way.

The continuation of sandmining until 2035 effectively provides for a longer and more realistic transition period to develop alternative economic activities on NSI.

Community support for sandmining

In late 2012, I conducted a community survey on NSI, with a questionnaire posted to every Post Office box on the island. An overwhelming 87% of NSI residents supported the continuation of sandmining operations beyond 2019.

A separate opinion poll showed 84% support for sandmining.^[1]

The results of the above and numerous other surveys demonstrate consistent and high levels of community support by NSI residents for continued sandmining operations.

The 2012 Queensland State election also delivered the LNP a state wide mandate to extend sandmining operations beyond 2019.



The introduction of this legislation is the fulfilment of a key commitment by the LNP at state and federal levels. Failure by the Queensland Government to fulfil such a core promise would be seen as a breach of faith with Queenslanders.

Socio-economic impacts

Sandmining is the second largest industry on NSI and provides for 14% of all jobs on the island, whereas mining only accounts for an average of 3% of employment across Queensland. The industry currently provides employment to 145 NSI residents and the mine employs over 60 local Indigenous families. On this basis alone it is clear that the loss of these jobs will be more acutely felt by the NSI community than if the loss of such jobs occurred elsewhere.

In addition to employment impacts, the sandmining industry has over time become highly integrated with other industries on NSI and so the impact of early and rapid cessation of mining would be magnified across the entire NSI economy.

While the immediate impact of job losses will be a significant concern to NSI residents, the flow on impacts of reduced economic activity (consumption and production) and reduced property values driven by a potential large scale exodus of residents will do great long term harm to the community.

A 2010 study into the likely impact of the early ending of sandmining showed that there would be loss of \$125 million per annum to the NSI economy, of which \$77.5 million represents value added loss.^[2]

A recent study undertaken by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning found that by extending sandmining between 2019 and 2035, the economic gains to NSI and Queensland to be around \$1.5 billion in mineral production, \$950 million in value added to Gross Regional/State Product, and royalties of \$75.74 million to the State.

The localised impacts on other areas of the NSI community would also be severe. It is estimated that 40% of children attending schools on NSI belong to families of sandmining employees. There is no doubt that reducing the number of students attending NSI schools will impact on the future viability of educational services.

In addition to education however, the viability of numerous other essential services are also put at risk by a shrinking of the NSI population. Health, ferry, vehicle transport, retail and indeed hospitality and tourism services will all be detrimentally impacted to varying degrees.

Importantly it must be noted that sandmining operations have co-existed with tourism and other industries since mining operations commenced in 1949. There is no evidence to suggest that sandmining has impeded the creation or expansion of other industries.

It must also be acknowledged that there is yet to be a realistic strategy proposed by any stakeholder that would ameliorate the significant socio-economic impacts of ending sandmining early as was proposed by the former Labor administration.

Environmental issues

The most serious environmental risks posed by sandmining include permanent damage to complex sand dune systems as well as compromising the natural value of important heathlands and wetlands (including NSIs Ramsar listed wetlands).

All of the environmental risks posed by sandmining appear to be managed by the mine operator in accordance with best practice and Sibelco Australia Limited undertakes environmental rehabilitation and remediation to world-class standards.

The company carries out a comprehensive eight step program to rehabilitate its mines involving re-profiling and topsoil spreading through to grasstree relocation and habitat construction. The company provides ongoing monitoring and maintenance of water quality, air quality, noise, flora and fauna.

The Bill provides for a new environmental authority to replace the current EA. The new EA will continue the stringent environmental protections already in place, and contemporize the current EA by removing redundant provisions.

Sandmining operations should not come at the expense of the environment and I am satisfied Sibelco Australia Limited will continue to fulfil its obligations under the terms of the new EA to ensure that the most stringent standards of environmental protection are upheld.

Health issues

In July 2012, Queensland Health conducted an investigation assessing the health risks associated with sandmining and found that there were no elevated risks posed to residents and employees by the mining, production and transportation process.^[3]

The investigation looked specifically at radiation levels at various sites involving the mining, production and transportation of mineral sand as such sand contains concentrated levels of uranium and thorium.

Native Title concerns

In 2011, the Quandamooka people were granted exclusive native title rights to over 2,264 hectares of land on NSI (known as Minjerribah), and non-exclusive rights to 22,639 hectares of land and 29,505 hectares of surrounding waters.

Following the determination, an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) was agreed to between the State and the Quandamooka people. The terms of the ILUA remain confidential. It is clear however that the ILUA permits sandmining operations to continue, and that the Quandamooka people directly benefit financially from continued sandmining on NSI through the payment of royalties.^[4] Given the very limited sources of revenue available to the traditional owners at the present time, the early cessation of sandmining and loss of royalty payments, with no replacement income, will also impact on the local Indigenous community.

According to the Bill's explanatory statement, the extension of sandmining will not impact on the joint Quandamooka/Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service management of the Naree Budjong Djara National Park which makes up roughly 50% of land on NSI.

Any future changes to sandmining operations should only be made in accordance with the terms of the ILUA and with the consent of the Quandamooka people.

Conclusion

This Bill to extend sandmining will assist in securing the economic future of the NSI community for decades to come. Importantly, the Bill ensures that the transition period to develop other industries for a post-mining era is extended to a more realistic timeframe.

The various issues that arise with respect to the *continuation* of sandmining, many of which are addressed in this submission, are much the same as they have always been since mining began on NSI. The fact is that sandmining has successfully co-existed with and contributed to the sustainability of other industries on NSI for decades and can continue to do so.

I commend the Queensland Government for introducing this Bill and for undertaking the necessary task of undoing the damaging policies implemented by the previous Labor administration.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist the Committee further.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Laming MP
Federal Member for Bowman

[1] <http://www.straddiefund.com.au/sustainable-stradbroke>

[2] http://www.sustainablestradbroke.com.au/Documents/Synergies%20Economic%20Consulting_Impact%20Report_JUNE.pdf

[3] <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/radiationhealth/documents/sum-rprt-nsi.pdf>

[4] See Page 7 <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/AREC/2013/16-NorthStradrokeIsland/trns-pb23Oct2013.pdf>