




Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Thursday, 7 April 2011

NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (11.39 am): The residents of North Stradbroke Island are not using the slogan 'Keep Kate' today. Instead today they are using the slogan 'Keep Kate away'. They are using the slogan 'Keep Kate away' because every time the member for Ashgrove accompanies the Premier to North Stradbroke Island the residents lose something. They are about to lose hundreds of jobs. They are about to lose their source of livelihood and income. This government, this Premier and the member for Ashgrove have not acted in the interests of the residents of North Stradbroke Island. They have taken away from them. They have now put their houses at risk. Already banks are not providing credit—

Government members interjected.

Dr ROBINSON: This is a fact; it is on record. Banks have started to not allow loans to be provided to people who are miners.

Mr Schwarten: Which bank? Name the bank.

Dr ROBINSON: It is not just one bank; it is a number of banks. This is not talking it down. These are the very real facts that the families and workers on North Stradbroke Island are facing, and this government could not care less.

I was making the point last night before the debate was adjourned that I could not support this bill in its current form because of a number of measures in the bill. The first was the very negative impact it will have on families. The residents are saying, 'Keep Kate away. Keep the Premier away. Every time they come we lose something.' This bill impacts negatively on the families. There are blue-collar workers and union workers approaching me on the streets on the island saying, 'We've been let down. We want our union membership back. We want our jobs back. Why does it take an LNP member to get up in this House and support the rights of workers? Whatever happened to the Labor Party?' That is what they are asking on the island, as the membership of the Labor Party on the island dwindles to almost nothing. Labor Party members are confused today. They do not know who they represent. They used to represent the workers; now they are not sure. The blue collar has been taken over by the green collar, and they are confused about who they stand for and what they stand for.

This bill will impact negatively on the North Stradbroke Island residents, and this shows how poor this bill is and how uncaring this government is towards the residents of the island. It is very likely that the cost of food, petrol and other goods and services on the island will go up as the cost of the ferries at some stage undoubtedly will have to go up. Already we are seeing a merger of the two main ferry companies that take people across to the island. We have seen that one of the main vehicular ferries has had to be restationed and taken up to Gladstone. This is preparing for the downturn on the island—a Premier-induced downturn—and this is something that the businesses, residents and workers are fighting against. There is probably barely a Labor vote left on the island. That is how bad this government is and how much

this government has abused the workers and people of North Stradbroke Island. That is the first reason I cannot support this bill.

Second, the bill in its current form places workers' lives at great risk due to DERM's dangerous alterations to the mine path? Where does DERM get off when it takes a mine path and alters that mine path. These are not mining engineers who are changing the direction of the mine path; these are DERM officials who are not experienced and not trained in these kinds of decisions that should be made by engineers. I am told that they have altered a safe mine path and made it unsafe. Now there will be certain corridors or parts of that Enterprise Mine path where the machines will have to go through steep embankments that they would not normally travel through, and this will put workers' lives in greater danger.

I am glad to say that at least the mine officials are being responsible about this and are considering the plight of the workers. They know that they cannot send that mine path through that dangerous substratum with these elevations, yet DERM officers will stand there and the minister will pretend in this House that there is no problem and no issue at all. She is happy to sign off on this and she is happy for that mine path to go right through a dangerous area. I find that very disturbing, and I am sure the workers of Queensland who for some reason look to this Labor government to protect their rights—although I do not think as many are looking to them now—feel the same about this. I am sure every blue-collar worker across Queensland today will be very unhappy to hear that their safety is now put in second place by this Labor government. Government members are altering and tampering with mine paths in order to get their way for a grubby Greens preference deal at the next election.

Third, this piece of legislation threatens the sustainability of the island community, particularly the economic sustainability. A lot could be said about this. Local businesses are reliant upon the economic benefit and custom that naturally comes from the miners. Miners buy groceries, eat at local bakeries and purchase local goods. The local economy also depends on tourism. There are many ways in which the economic viability and sustainability of this community will be negatively impacted by this bill.

Fourth, this bill breaks a promise made by the Premier and her accomplice, the member for Ashgrove, to the people of Stradbroke Island in June last year that mining would continue until 2027 so as to allow for a timely and smooth transition to a non-sandmining economy. This bill, however, drastically shortens that transition time and is another government broken promise. These government members have demonstrated once again to the people of Queensland that they are not people of their word. They cannot be trusted to tell the truth and to stick to it. Their commitments are worthless.

Fifth, this bill was not the result of a genuine consultation process with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents. Only a few select Quandamooka elders and select green groups had any knowledge of the 20 June 2010 decision and announcement. There was no consultation, except for very secret meetings with a few select groups who chartered the course of this grubby deal with an election in sight. That is how it came about.

The general population did not know anything about this. In fact, 95 per cent of the 700-plus people who were surveyed said that they were not aware of the decision that was coming and did not believe there was sufficient consultation. That is typical of this government. They make a decision, do not consult and then have a sales program afterwards. They call it consultation, but their minds are already made up and the residents have no say. Again we see how this government does business in Queensland. It is not acceptable. This long-term, tired Labor government has learnt to forget the people: 'Don't ask the people because we might not want to do what they say.'

The government has not considered the concerns of the Quandamooka people. The majority of the family representatives and elders who represent the Quandamooka people of North Stradbroke Island have not had the opportunity to speak to this bill. They do not have an Indigenous land use agreement in place. This government is completely out of line. This government has stepped ahead of that process to announce it, to be election ready in order to put the green capital on the table and say to the Greens, 'We are serious about giving you whatever tracts of land you want. Just ask for it and we'll give it to you. Just make sure you sign off on those Greens preference deals at the next election so we can stay in power.' That is what is driving this.

Two public meetings were held as sales meetings afterwards. Hundreds of people attended and they all objected. They were hostile meetings. I cannot believe that this government can turn that around and say, 'There's been consultation. The people have been listened to. We've done the bidding of the people.' That has never happened at any stage. There is no ILUA in place. The government has let down the people of North Stradbroke Island.

Six, as the Queensland Resources Council has pointed out, this bill creates sovereign risk to all mining activity in Queensland. Cancelling mining leases without compensation sets a dangerous precedence of government interference. The QRC has come out and said that this is disappointing because it is a signal to the global resources community that long-term investments in Queensland are subject to political whims.

Seven, the shorter transitional period to a non-sandmining economy is now too short—from 16 years back to something like eight years or maybe less. This is not enough time to put in another economic plan, not enough time to bring in tourism. It has shortened this period and this is not workable. The director of Brisbane Marketing said that it would take five Tangaloomas to replace the economic benefit.

Finally, this bill does not protect the high conservation aspects of the island. I agree with Des Houghton's analysis that the environment would be better off under a Newman government. The people of Stradbroke Island would be better off under a Newman government. Conservation and the environment would be better off under a Newman government.