



Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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**NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY AND
ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (11.05 pm): I rise to also support the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Other Act Amendment Bill 2013. The bill—

Ms Trad: You're a disgrace!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! I will ask the member for South Brisbane to direct her comments through the chair.

Mr POWELL: The bill honours our government's election commitment to deliver a staged and orderly end to sandmining while protecting some of North Stradbroke Island's most valued sites. The previous Labor government sought to restrict mining activities on the island prematurely, crippling the local economy and not providing any alternative industry capable of generating the same number of jobs or incomes to local residents.

As environment minister, it is my responsibility to balance environmental protection with sustainable economic growth. This bill strikes a balance between how long it will take to develop and establish alternative industries on North Stradbroke Island and ensuring the mine operator can maintain an economically viable and sustainable sandmining operation that supports the local economy until those further industries are established. This bill includes a new environmental authority that replaces—in fact, reinstates—the previous EA referenced in the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Another Act Amendment Bill. The new authority has been contemporised by removing redundant provisions and introduces model mining conditions that reflect current best practice and support this government's commitment to reducing green tape and regulatory burden for industry.

Let me assure the House, and particularly those opposite, that despite their incredible scare tactics, particularly from Labor and the greens, the environmental protection of North Stradbroke Island has not been compromised with these changes. The new environmental authority contains a wide range of conditions to protect the environmental values of the island specifically designed around the proposed mining project. For example, the authority identifies areas where disturbance can occur; areas where disturbance is prohibited such as category A and B environmentally sensitive areas; and areas where disturbance may be permitted if a management plan has been developed and approved by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

As well as prohibiting disturbance in environmentally sensitive areas of high conservation value such as category A, national parks, and category B, Ramsar wetlands, these areas have also been protected with extra conditions in the environmental authority. These safeguards include buffer zones of up to 100 metres and water management controls for adjacent wetlands. In recognition that some sensitive areas are adjacent to the mining area, the new environmental authority has also been conditioned to protect those important environmental values. For example, the mining operator must

produce an environmental monitoring program to assess any changes in environmental values that may be caused by mining operations. The plan must include trigger levels and management actions to deal with any situations when the trigger levels are exceeded.

The plan must also be submitted to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection each year, along with the results of the monitoring program. The department must also be notified if any triggers are exceeded. The environmental authority is also conditioned to include rehabilitation requirements and the bill allows for the renewal of mining leases at the Yarraman and Enterprise mines for a period of up to five years with a non-winning provision to allow access for rehabilitation purposes.

Predictably, the Greens and their Labor mates will try their hardest to whip up fear, but the truth is that the area approved for mining activities under the new environmental authority is a significant reduction in area available to mining than was approved prior to the introduction of the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act in 2011. The new authority restricts mining operations to three mining leases at Enterprise, whereas the original one allowed for mining operations in 11 mining leases.

I also make the point that, in addition to complying with the conditions of their environmental authority, the mining operator must also meet obligations under the Environmental Protection Act 1994. This includes a general environmental duty, a duty to notify environmental harm and a range of provisions in relation to causing environmental harm or nuisance and avoiding water contamination.

In addition to all of these safeguards, my Department of Environment and Heritage Protection will undertake regular inspections as part of its annual compliance program. We will continue our role as a strong environmental regulator, and appropriate action will be taken should noncompliance occur.

The majority of the Enterprise mine area is of low ecological significance, with more than half of its footprint having been previously disturbed or used for key infrastructure such as roads or powerlines. Together with the safeguards in place and site-specific conditions for sensitive and high-value areas, we will see the continued protection of important and iconic features such as Blue Lake and the 18 Mile Swamp.

In summing up, not only will these amendments offer new protection to some of the island's most iconic sites; they will also deliver a modern environmental authority and, most importantly, deliver a balance between environmental protection and sustainable economic growth. I commend the bill to the House.