




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2016

**NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY AND  
OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL; NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND  
PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY (RENEWAL OF MINING LEASES)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (10.30 pm): I rise to address the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015. This bill was introduced by the Hon. Steven Miles MP on 3 December 2015. The purpose of Labor's bill is to effectively repeal existing, sensible and realistic legislation implemented by the former LNP government and, in doing so, phase out sandmining on North Stradbroke Island by 2019.

North Stradbroke Island, or Minjerribah, as it is known to the Quandamooka traditional owners, is one of nature's jewels. It is the second largest sand island in the world. In close proximity to Brisbane, the island has lakes and wetlands, a rich biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage that spans 20,000 years. Certainly nothing should be done to damage this valuable asset of Queensland.

While tourism plays an important part in the island's economy, sandmining is, and has been for over 60 years, the main source of income to keep the island and its community viable. This should be acknowledged by the native title holders. Unfortunately, Labor's planned economic transition strategy is not adequate to replace the hundreds of jobs that will be lost as a result of the Palaszczuk government's rushed plan to end sandmining. Labor's so-called plan has been widely questioned because its details are scarce and the level of funding that will be made available is inadequate. Understandably, local residents have little confidence that it will deliver a smooth transition and have warned that they will most likely have to join the long list of Queensland communities suffering as a consequence of a mining and resources sector economic slowdown.

The LNP is opposed to the Palaszczuk Labor government's plan to end sandmining on Stradbroke Island before 2035 because of the impact it will have on the local community, including the traditional owners of North Stradbroke Island. Full, genuine and open consultation with the local Stradbroke Island community and all affected residents on this issue should have been completed before this legislation was debated in the Queensland parliament.

The Finance and Administration Committee, which held public hearings on this important public matter during March, uncovered the fact that the lost sandmining jobs will not be replaced by jobs in other industries on North Stradbroke Island. At the present time, sandmining generates between \$60 million and \$80 million per year for the local economy and employs around 100 island residents. What Labor's job plan for Queensland could really be called is jobs now and no jobs for the future.

The Finance and Administration Committee report stated that mine workers could retrain with government assistance and find jobs on the \$1.3 billion Toondah Harbour development planned for Brisbane's bayside. However, for many residents moving from North Stradbroke Island is not an option.

A Deloitte Access Economics analysis, commissioned by the state government, found the transition strategy to end mining on the island could create up to 151 jobs across the construction, conservation, tourism and aged-care sectors. The Deloitte report also noted that these industries will not replace all mining jobs in the short to medium-term.

Mr Colin Battersby from the North Stradbroke Island chamber of commerce said 151 transitional jobs would not be enough to sustain the losses to the local community. Mr Battersby said that many of the chamber of commerce's member businesses relied heavily, directly or indirectly, on the mining business and its associated employees. He said that they are very worried about the speed in which the mines will close down. He questioned who is going to be visiting the island, staying in local accommodation, eating in their restaurants and shopping in their shops.

As clearly outlined by the LNP shadow minister for mines, the honourable Andrew Cripps MP, the LNP remains satisfied that the 2035 closure date is the most sensible time frame for the end of sandmining on North Stradbroke Island because it provides certainty for local residents and businesses and provides for a realistic time frame to transition from sandmining to other alternative economic endeavours to maintain the local economy. The North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Another Act Amendment Act 2013 put in place by the former LNP government allowed for a reasonable time frame for the local economy to transition to other industries and so far no persuasive argument has been put forward to change the LNP's position. The LNP is very concerned about the Palaszczuk Labor government's plan to end mining by the year 2019. This is many years earlier than was envisaged by the former LNP government and is of great concern.

I also take the opportunity to refer to the private member's bill introduced by the honourable member for Dalrymple which seeks to end sandmining by the end of 2024. That would allow another five years for rehabilitation of the mine sites by the operator, Sibelco, on the island up until 2029. The honourable member's bill also calls for the imposition of a mine path. It should be noted that this private member's bill was rejected in the parliamentary report.

As I have said, the LNP recognises the importance of sandmining to North Stradbroke Island's economy. It provides hundreds of direct and indirect jobs, which are the livelihoods of many families both on the island and on the mainland. There are sound arguments to keep the current 2035 closure date in place and not to accede to political pressure from groups that do not represent the views of the overwhelming majority of local people on North Stradbroke Island. Whilst the Katter bill is an extension from 2019 to 2024, it is still very far from an adequate time frame.

There needs to be a fine balance between sustainable economic growth and the environment, and the continuation of mining should not detract from that. As the recently appointed shadow minister for the environment and heritage protection, I will work to ensure our natural environment is retained and preserved whilst also achieving balance when the competing interests of conservation and commerce exist.

A local resident and business operator voiced her concerns that one result of the mine closure would be the transition of a vibrant locality into a ghost town. Consider the current situation in Emerald, where rental properties once commanding \$1,000 a week are now only worth \$100 a week, and that is if they are rented at all. Many houses are now sitting empty in Emerald. The local business community and residents on North Stradbroke Island do not want to see that happen there.

The impending loss of jobs as a result of the legislation before us comes at a time when the trend in Queensland's unemployment is on the rise. The latest unemployment figures show increases in both trend and seasonally adjusted terms as Queensland falls further behind the rest of Australia.

The current mine operator on North Stradbroke Island and the chamber of commerce and industry in Queensland have determined that ending sandmining in 2019 will cause the loss of \$70 million to \$100 million in net economic and social benefits to the local community and broader state economy, as well as a loss of millions of dollars to the state of Queensland by reduced annual royalties and associated taxes and levies. What the Palaszczuk Labor government should be delivering is a responsible, measured and balanced outcome with respect to environmental policy and community and economic needs of the residents on North Stradbroke Island. Unfortunately, the Labor government is not doing so.

For the Deputy Premier to make some outrageous allegations about former LNP premier Campbell Newman—also including a reference to his late father, the honourable Kevin Newman—was highly inappropriate and poor indeed. All I would say to those Labor backbench members opposite is that when the time comes for the Premier to be rolled as leader of the Labor Party, make sure that the new leader is someone with an ethical framework as opposed to the member for the South Brisbane. I oppose this bill.