




Speech By
Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (10.22 pm): Tonight I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the North Stradbroke Island bills. Madam Deputy Speaker, like yourself I was a member of the Finance and Administration Committee that travelled to North Stradbroke Island on two occasions. I recognise that this is a very polarising and divisive topic. We spent about five days on North Stradbroke, on two different occasions. We met with a large range of people. We held a number of community functions that attracted a couple of hundred people. We met with a number of different organisations. On North Stradbroke Island, the palpable feeling was that this is a very divisive topic about which people are very passionate. I respect that because I know that for the people of North Stradbroke Island this is certainly about their future and it is certainly about their past.

I am not from North Stradbroke Island. I am from Cairns. My family has lived in Cairns for one generation. At best I can trace three generations that lived in Victoria. Beyond that, I can track my ancestors back to Scotland and England for, at best, 10 generations. What I cannot do is what the member for Algeester can do; she can track her ancestors back some 3,000 generations. I acknowledge the Quandamooka people in the gallery tonight, particularly the elders and the CEO of QYAC, Cameron Costello. They too can track their ancestors back through that many generations. That is a very special thing and I am quite envious of it.

I have transferred committees since the North Stradbroke Island report was handed down. I thank the members of the Finance and Administration Committee with whom I have worked over the past 14 or 15 months, yourself included, Madam Deputy Speaker. In particular, I thank the member for Bulimba, who was the original chair of the committee. She travelled to North Stradbroke Island with us the first time. The member for Sunnybank escorted us on our second visit to the island. I thank all the members of the committee.

The committee heard a lot of information from the many sides of the debate. However, I do not think we heard a lot of fact. We received a lot of information and a lot of—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr CRAWFORD: I said we did not hear a lot of fact; we heard a lot of opinion. I will summarise some of what I picked up. As I said before, I am not from North Stradbroke Island; I am from Cairns. Prior to visiting North Stradbroke Island with the committee, I had never been there. I had no preconceived opinions about North Stradbroke Island, mining or anything else to do with that part of the world. I went pretty much as a clean slate. I thought, 'We'll see what we have to deal with'. I was not instructed to follow any particular line.

When on North Stradbroke Island, I spoke with people about the issues around the miners who work for Sibelco. I can see their pain. I can see the issues that they have as workers and what they are facing. I recognise the uncertainty that they have for their future and the future of North Stradbroke Island, and what that means for their families. It is very important that after tonight, irrespective of the outcome of the debate, the government takes into consideration the need to ensure that things are in place and are done properly.

The economic transition plan for North Stradbroke Island needs to be very robust. I do not think it is necessarily an issue about the dollar figure. I have heard a lot of zeroes being talked about, but I do not think it is about the zeroes. I think it is about what it actually means for the people on the ground, on North Stradbroke Island. If you are a 35-year-old bulldozer operator who is working for the mine at the moment, what does it mean for you and your family? At the end of all this, when mining finishes, what will it mean for you and your family? How will you continue to survive and prosper on the island? The government and all of its departments need to ensure that this conversation continues well past this evening.

It is my observation that workers on the island work quite hard. They have good trades. I spoke to a number of heavy machinery operators and environmentalists who work with a number of different tools in a number of different trades. I learnt that for some of the workers on North Stradbroke the transition to tourism will be challenging. That has to be taken into consideration by our departments as we move forward.

I did pick up on the concept of rehabilitation, which I will talk about briefly. A few other members have also touched on rehabilitation tonight. When we talk about rehabilitating the land after a sand mine is finished, we are not talking about restoring it perfectly to the hill, the slope, the creek—whatever it was prior to the sand mine. To me, that really creates a GPS coordinate that you can stand on and say, 'This is the GPS coordinate of a very important site for myself'. I felt that we were doing a bit of an injustice over there, because an Indigenous person from North Stradbroke Island cannot stand on a spot on that island that has been rehabilitated and say, 'This is the location of a significant event for my family'. I feel a bit of sorrow for them, in that respect.

Throughout this whole inquiry, the thing that got me the most—and it is a thing that I cannot move past—is the subject of native land title. Without the native land title declaration in 2011, we might be having a whole different argument. For me the conversation around native title and Justice Dowsett's decision on 4 July 2011 has stuck with me. Everywhere I looked in relation to this topic I could not move past that particular issue. The Quandamooka people were given native title rights and interests within the Australian legal system in 2011. I feel that binds us as a parliament.

I heard what the member for Cleveland said about the legal option on native title. That is his advice. That is fine. At the end of my time as a parliamentarian in Queensland I want to know that I have done what is morally right for people. What I cannot do is sit in this House and be a part of anything that advocates the taking away of the legal rights of people—people who have been here for 3,000 generations—and replace it with something which is totally unjust.

I support the government bill. I do not support the bill introduced by the crossbench. I thank the Quandamooka people for their contribution to our inquiry.