




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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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 POWER** (Logan—ALP) (11.00 pm): I rise to support the minister's North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and other Acts Amendment Bill 2015. The transition from one industry to another is difficult—difficult for workers, just as the start of mining would have been difficult for traditional owners. The act of mining inevitably damages the land, and the land on Straddie is indeed special and something that all Queenslanders would seek to protect. No-one should pretend that this issue is easy or that the transition will not be difficult for some.

Sandmining started on Straddie in 1949, but for thousands of years Aboriginal people practised traditional ways of life, generation after generation. They called the island Minjerribah, and having survived almost 200 years of dispossession they still call the island by that name. With my brothers on a camping trip on the island, I stared at wonder at the thousand year deposit of shells from a midden that a recent storm had exposed on the island. There was also a heavy, sharpened stone amongst the shells, no doubt taken to the island by a locally made boat and used perhaps before any Aboriginal person ever dreamed that aliens from a cold island on the other side of the world would dump prisoners on their island changing their way of life forever.

European colonists often used the island and interacted with the people who had called this island home in an unthinking and often violent fashion. The Brisbane colonists attempted to build a military post at Dunwich, displacing the local residents using convict labour. Later the colonial society dumped others on the island, creating the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum. Some 500 people at the asylum died on the island and are buried mostly in unmarked graves, including my great-great-grandfather, Michael Ryan, who died on the island in 1911. The ultimate damage for the island was that in 1896 after a ship struck the island. Looters attracted to the wreck blew up the ship's supply of dynamite, creating craters that when a storm came through further tore apart the island creating the north and south island we know today. Our presence literally tore the island in two.

We have further torn at the island since 1949 through sandmining. The mines have had both positives and negatives for the island. It has provided a source of local employment not least for some Aboriginal people. However, it is also something that all in this House recognise has a limited future and at some stage must end. As we mine more of the island, the balance between economic activity and preserving this incredible island begins to tip. Further, I hope all in this House recognise that Aboriginal people continue to have a special relationship, a right to this land.

In 2011 the then Labor government recognised a path to the end of mining in recognition of the wishes of the Quandamooka people. The bill allowed for an 8½ year transition and locked in a Labor policy to end sandmining on the main lease in 2019. We know that Straddie must find a path to sustainability beyond sandmining. It has incredible beauty and is a special place. We must find a way to sustain the economy of the island.

The new government under Mr Newman for political reasons extended leases to an extraordinary date of 2035—far beyond the expectation of any party involved. They did this maliciously to ensure that Straddie workers and landowners would continue to be uncertain, as they knew that the majority of Queenslanders would never accept the LNP's indefinite extension. They made political playthings of workers and landowners. The LNP knew it and they did not care. They steamrolled over the views of native title holders. A more reasonable transition—and I recognise the member for Dalrymple's attempt at this—may have met with broader community acceptance over time. However, I think the LNP knew that their indeterminate extension would never give certainty. They wanted to play their political games with people's lives. Here again they have a cynical strategy about the inevitable transition from mining.

This is not to pretend that the transition will be simple, nor that the differences in views between parties can be reconciled. I respect the AWU for standing up for workers facing this difficult transition. Their job is to stand up for their members. Our job in this place is to attempt to balance all of the views and values, which as I said sometimes cannot be reconciled.

I saw submission No. 208 from a group of Indigenous sandminers which asked for the sandmining to be continued. I also saw submission No. 244 from QYAC that asked that the sandmining be ended in 2019. It is not easy to reconcile even these views between two conflicting Indigenous groups. The Queensland government is committed to an economic transition—a transition to a sustainable economy that inevitably does not include the sandmining that all in this place accept must cease. To deliver the commitment, the Queensland government has developed a Draft North Stradbroke Island Economic Transition Strategy, supported by 16 actions which aim to drive sustainable tourism, expand education and training opportunities, and foster business development and growth. The government will be allocating \$20 million to build on the island's current capacity and economy over the next five years and \$5 million for a workers assistance scheme to help mine workers transition into new employment. This is part of the process of 16 years of native title negotiations and a process also begun in 1991 to begin ideas about a transition to national park for the island. As I said in the beginning of this speech, this transition will be difficult for some but we also know that this transition was inevitable and that this government offers support for the transition. I commend the bill to the House.