




Speech By  
**Michael Crandon**

**MEMBER FOR COOMERA**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

**MOTION: NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
LEGISLATION**

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook relating to the proposed workforce and economic transition plans for North Stradbroke Island. It would appear that the minister has agreed to amend the document to open it up to the transition plans and then give us 4½ weeks to look at those transition plans. Putting aside the fact that he has hidden the report of January-February this year behind cabinet in confidence, it is absolutely disgraceful.

It is also coincidental that today is National Close the Gap Day. At the crux of this day is the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can expect to live anywhere from 10 to 17 years less than non-Indigenous Australians. There is a range of reasons why this is the case. Some of those reasons lie around lower levels of education and higher levels of unemployment. I note that in the 2015 *Closing the gap* report it states—

There are three priority areas that have been proven to have a positive effect on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- getting children to school to provide the best chance of enjoying success in school and later in life
- getting adults into work to ensure Indigenous Australians participate in the modern economy ...

They are the first two of those priority areas, which fits in exactly with what I have just said. It was with these facts in mind that one of the Quandamooka groups which I spoke with told me that they feared for their people. They made the very salient point that this should not be about closing a mine; it should be focused, instead, on closing the gap. They have seen the proposed North Stradbroke Island transition strategies and they know what it will do to their community if they are implemented in such a short period of time.

That brings me to the motion before us. Both the previous chair and the current chair of this committee consistently advised witnesses and audience participants that the transition plans do not form part of the committee's considerations. This is despite the fact that, prior to our arrival on the island, in early February, the minister arranged for a specialist consultation group to spend some weeks on the island interviewing people, informing people and gathering feedback from people about these plans. This is despite the department requesting and being granted an opportunity to present these plans to the hundreds of people who attended our first two public hearings. This is despite the fact that a senior departmental officer waxed lyrical about how well received the people were who were undertaking the work. He told those present that around 250 people had provided feedback. He told them that was around 10 per cent of the people living on the island. What he did not tell them and what he will not tell the committee is the results of that work.

Initially, he told us that he was unsure whether he would be able to provide the information to us. He then told us that he could not provide the information to us. Why? Because the minister has put it into cabinet. It is cabinet in confidence. What is the minister hiding? Is the feedback so negative on the

proposed transition strategy that they dare not let it see the light of day? Based on the vast majority of feedback I have received, the transition strategy is woefully inadequate. The officers from the Redland City Council told me that some of the figures supplied to them by the department were approaching \$60 million, and that was not all of the items that may be considered necessary. The Australian Workers' Union indicated it was inadequate to the extent that it suggested another zero was needed to be put on to it. Is the union suggesting the \$28.5 million proposal should be \$285 million?

There are massive issues around the impact on all aspects of the island—economic, structural, employment and loss of jobs, business, lifestyle and the environment—but ultimately it is the impact on the people of Straddie, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. All of these issues interact with one another in an incredibly complex way, as they do in a broader society, but they are more complex for the people of Straddie because of the remoteness. There is only one way to Straddie, and that is by boat. The ferries are the umbilical cord that ties Straddie to the mainland. Anything that affects Straddie affects the ferry services. Affect the ferry services and you affect the people of Straddie.

I call on all members to support this motion to include the proposed transition strategies in the committee's consideration to give the committee the time that we need, until 1 September, to do the job properly. In doing so, we will be able to give proper consideration to the real impacts of the proposed legislation on the people of Straddie. I can assure members that the more we look the more we realise that this matter before us demands a thorough understanding—an understanding of the impact on the island economy and, ultimately, the impact on the people. If I can finish—

*(Time expired)*