




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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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 KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (11.34 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015 and also make reference to the private member's bill, the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability (Renewal of Mining Leases) Amendment Bill 2015.

The proposal in the private member's bill to move the sandmining closure date to 2024 offers a sensible compromise between the positions of both major parties. The former government had sandmining continuing to 2035, while the current government plans to phase it out by 2019. The middle ground proposed provides some balance. It recognises the intent of many parties to wind down mining but at the same time allows an acceptable transition period. I will come back to that point, but I think the transition period is the most critical point, from the point of view of the KAP and me.

These workers have been pulled from pillar to post. At the moment there is an ongoing dialogue in Queensland about job certainty and industry and employment issues. I think they are paramount with people. I do not think this is the time to compromise that. This bill most certainly does in this case. I appreciate the virtues of some of the arguments being put in favour of the 2019 closure, but they are not reason enough to cut those 100 very precious mining jobs that exist on the island at this time. Of course, I come from a mining community in north-west Queensland, which I see as a microcosm of what we are experiencing in this state—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I know that it is getting very late and that this has been quite a long debate, but there are a lot of people standing around talking and it is actually getting quite hard to hear the member for Mount Isa. Could we please pay him the respect of allowing him to speak.

Mr KATTER: Forgive me for stating the obvious. It may seem like only 100 jobs and that they can be replaced in other areas, but 100 jobs is 100 jobs. Jobs are so precious at this time in Queensland. In the Mount Isa area, if 100 jobs are lost to a town or community it can smash it. It will send shock waves through the community. The same amount of damage is done in an economy down here; it is just not as visible because it is on a bigger scale. You want to think very carefully about cutting 100 mining jobs because the reverberations are felt, even if not acutely. The effects are there and they do hurt the economy. I think that is a very critical point. In the part of the cycle we are in at the moment, I think jobs and industry issues are paramount to most Queenslanders. That is not to discount the native title issues and environmental issues that have been raised. I think they are very important, but on balance they do not outweigh the imperative to give people the benefit of a livelihood and meaningful work.

Clearly, the committee faced difficulty in its inquiry process. It heard a lot of conflicting views. That was evident in a lot of recordings I read. I refer to the Deloitte Access Economics report. It said that 141 mining jobs were identified in 2011, and this was assumed to be the number of direct sandmining jobs. An amount of \$55 million was established to be the current total contribution of sandmining operations. That is \$55 million from some 140 workers.

The same study said that currently three per cent of the Redlands workforce or 1,256 people are employed in jobs relating to the tourism industry, with visitors currently contributing \$49 million each year to the Redlands gross regional product. Another interesting comment in that report was that sandmining jobs offered the highest average personal income of \$73,000 a year versus the average annual income on North Stradbroke of \$44,000 a year. Clearly mining is a foundation of the economy that not only affects the Redlands area but also contributes to the Queensland economy, even though it might be in a small way, and now is not the time to do this. Tourism has its strengths, but often in a lot of rural towns if the cattle industry is down tourism has a great capacity to provide some income but it is not a replacement. It cannot be a replacement of those bigger industries that really drive the economy in those places. If we relied on tourism alone, some of those towns would disappear. It is a great thing to put energy into and nurture and cultivate, but it is not a replacement for these industries and we have to be very careful to treat it that way.

The main thrust for extending the life of that mine is not to disrespect or disregard the considerations by the stakeholders involved, but from KAP's point of view jobs and industry are essential in the current economy. That is an imperative. These might be actions that can be taken at a time when we can afford to do them, but this is not a time in Queensland when we can do that sort of thing. Coming from a mining area, I know what cutting 100 jobs does to the economy. You get a very real sense of that in a smaller community and I am sure that this would have the same effect on the island.

I have visited Stradbroke Island three or four times in my life. I would not say that I have a good feel for it at all, but I am not completely naive as to what the drivers are in that economy. It is clear that tourism plays a part, but the end of mining will leave a massive hole, and my heart will be with those workers who rely critically on that income to keep their families going. Without that meaningful work from mining it will leave a big hole. Many of the social issues that we talk about and address in this parliament come back to that one issue—that is, that there is meaningful work available for someone to support their family. With regard to taking those 100 jobs away, yes, in time we might re-create them in some other industry, but sending a shock through a community like that in an abbreviated time line as suggested is not the right thing to do. It is a poor decision, which is why we have introduced the alternative bill extending mining to 2024 to at least give these people some longevity and a right to have that income and that meaningful work.