




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (12.11 am), in reply: Firstly, I thank all honourable members for their participation in this debate. I also thank the Finance and Administration Committee for their thorough consideration of the bill, which included taking a broad range of community views into account. I especially acknowledge the work of both committee chairs who worked on the inquiry, the members for Bulimba and Sunnybank. In their contributions tonight, both demonstrated how deeply they had listened to and reflected on the issues.

When I introduced this bill, I said that North Stradbroke Island—Straddie or Minjerribah to the traditional owners—is a special place, and it is. Anyone who has spent time on the beaches or in the ocean, walking on the tracks or climbing the sand dunes knows just how special it is. It is even more special to the Quandamooka people who, as we heard tonight, have 3,000 generations of history there. It is just gone midnight, which means it is now National Sorry Day. To have the voice of Indigenous communities restored on this important day is very significant.

The member for Algeester spoke powerfully, from a perspective unique in this place, as a Quandamooka woman. It is a great honour to serve with someone so passionate and so powerful. It was wonderful to hear her speak that language, with elders and leaders of the Quandamooka people in the gallery. It was almost as good as watching the member for Hinchinbrook squirming in his chair after his disgusting self-justification of his utter disregard for the traditional owners.

The member for Algeester spoke some big important truths. It was a shame she had to, but it was important that someone finally called out the LNP and especially the member for Cleveland for their campaign to divide the Minjerribah community. When I heard that the member for Cleveland was setting elders against each other and against their family members and when I learnt of the grief and sadness that was causing, it reinforced to me just how important certainty is for this community. I plead with the member for Cleveland: whatever the result on this bill, put an end to your cruel campaign of division. It has to end.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members, the member for Cleveland has not raised a point of order or asked for a withdrawal.

Dr MILES: I repeat: I plead with the member for Cleveland, whatever the result on the bill tonight, to put an end to his cruel campaign of division. It has to end. If he is any kind of servant to that community, he must accept the outcome and work with us on a transition.

While the member for Algester called those opposite out for their behaviour on the island, it was the Deputy Premier who called out the LNP for their hypocrisy in protesting the closure of sandmining while they sacked thousands of workers. What is the difference between the Sibelco workers and the thousands of others the LNP sacked? There is one difference.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Hinchinbrook, you have had ample opportunity to speak on this bill.

Dr MILES: What is the difference between the Sibelco workers and the thousands that the LNP sacked? One big cheque!

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Minister for Education, I do not need your provocation.

Ms Jones: They spent 90,000—

Mr SPEAKER: No! I call the minister.

Dr MILES: The difference is one big cheque for \$92,000, which helped elect the Newman government. That is all it cost to buy a bill from the member for Hinchinbrook. Let us be clear about the history here: in 2012, the then Nicholls-Newman opposition promised that they would make no changes to the Bligh government's legislation. Then, as with so many of the promises they made, and just like with land clearing, as soon as they were elected they let their environmental vandal in chief, the member for Hinchinbrook, off the leash. It was his job to pay the mining company back for its support for Campbell Newman and for its aggressive campaign to unseat the then and now member for Ashgrove. They delivered an extension to 2035, which is eight years longer than Sibelco asked for, with no regard at all for the rights or interests of the traditional owners.

As with so many of the extreme ideological things the member for Hinchinbrook did, tonight this parliament must right a very bad wrong. Tonight we can start Straddie back on a path to sustainable jobs. Tonight we can protect the precious environment of this special place. Tonight we can give back to the Quandamooka people the right to access and care for their land.

Sandmining was always going to end. It was a finite resource with a finite life. Only Labor has a plan to create sustainable jobs that will be there long after mining ends. Only Labor has a vision for the island other than ripping it up.

I acknowledge the efforts of the member for Dalrymple in proposing what he considers to be a compromise. I want to be clear that the traditional owners consider that 2019 is a compromise. The 2011 native title determination was unequivocal in granting the Quandamooka people native title rights over 54,408 hectares of land and water on and around North Stradbroke Island. As we heard from the member for Algester, Quandamooka elders have not had access to sites of great cultural significance since they were young children and, without this bill, they will not be able to teach the new generation, perhaps the 3,001st generation of Quandamooka, about those sacred sites.

This bill substantially ends sandmining by 2019, the bill reinstates a restricted mine path over the Enterprise Mine and the bill ensures that rehabilitation occurs in a timely way so that others can begin to enjoy the lands that have been occupied by mining for decades. This is especially true for the traditional owners, who not only desire but also deserve access to their sacred lands. It is time to restore their access and help them to achieve their aim of becoming the world's most sustainable island. Transitioning from mining supports ecotourism, which is a sustainable use of the island.

We have heard that the committee received over 2,000 submissions on the bill, which my department and the committee have gone through in detail. The private member's bill allows access for rehabilitation for a maximum period of only five years. This is a key deficiency and, as has been determined by the committee, is insufficient. Allowing satisfactory rehabilitation to occur following the end of sandmining is essential and the reality is that it is likely to take longer than five years.

My department has taken on board the operational requirements of the mining company and the native title requirements of the prescribed body corporate. I am confident that the new rehabilitation authorisation in the bill resolves stakeholder concerns satisfactorily.

The member for Algester reminded us of the landmark ILUA signed by the state and the prescribed body corporate in 2011. That ILUA took 16 years to negotiate. From talking to anyone who was there that day, it is clear that it was a much celebrated and extremely emotional event. Today we remember that historic signing and honour the elders past and present who fought so hard to see that agreement in place.

The bill reinstates a restricted mine path for the Enterprise Mine that properly reflects contemporary operational issues, while avoiding impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage and high-conservation areas. In combination with the draft economic transition strategy, the bill will secure the rich cultural heritage of North Stradbroke Island.

As we have heard tonight, the bill is just one element of the government's policy for North Stradbroke Island. The government has committed \$20 million over five years to support the island's economy throughout this transition period. On top of this, there is an additional \$3.87 million in in-kind contribution from the Queensland government to support the strategy. A further \$5 million has been allocated to the North Stradbroke Island Sand Mining Workers Assistance Scheme to help affected sand miners transition to other employment.

The strategy focuses on actions which drive sustainable tourism, expand education and training opportunities and foster local business development and growth. The actions that are contained in the strategy are too many to mention, but I am particularly pleased that the strategy includes an expansion of the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program. This is a unique and highly successful initiative that delivers real environmental and employment outcomes to some of the most culturally important and environmentally sensitive parts of our state. It is brilliant that the island will benefit from a boost in this program.

I will turn to some of the claims made by the member for Hinchinbrook. He claimed the rehabilitation authorisation was untried and untested. Unlike renewing mining leases, the rehabilitation authorisation will allow for compromises to be reached between QYAC and Sibelco about land access. Yes this is new, but in developing this provision we have extensively consulted with both QYAC and Sibelco to make sure it meets both parties' needs.

The member also noted concerns that the bill extends the health and safety legislation to areas that are not under a mining lease. Mining health and safety legislation already applies across multiple types of tenures and even includes where mining is illegal and to abandoned mines. The government's bill makes sure that health and safety legislation applies to this new type of authorisation. As I said earlier, the health and safety of mine workers and the general public is of prime concern to us.

The member for Hinchinbrook raised concerns in relation to supposed sovereign risk. He argued that introducing rehabilitation authorisations to allow access after mining leases have ended will impact on sovereign risk. He called this the sovereign risk icing on the sovereign risk cake. I think his mind had wandered. I think he was thinking about cake.

This argument is based on fear. It is important to emphasise that the bill does not impact mining activities in other parts of the state. It should also be acknowledged that the bill reinstates an end to mining in 2019 that was originally introduced in 2011 and that investment in mining in Queensland continued after 2011. Rehabilitation requirements are set at the point of authorisation. It is just absurd to argue that including provisions that enable these existing requirements to be met creates sovereign risk when the obligations have been there all along.

The private member's bill also fails to include a provision for the amendment of and compliance with a proposed restricted mine path. In contrast, the government's bill allows for amendment to the restricted mine path. I must emphasise that amendments can only be made where no impacts on threatened ecosystems or cultural and environmental values will result. The bill also limits the time frame for making such an application. It is proposed that amending the bill to increase the time limit to six months is a realistic and reasonable compromise.

During my visits to the island and meetings with stakeholders, I was overwhelmed by the talent, commitment and resilience of the Straddie community. With this passion and drive I have great confidence that the island's transition will be a positive one.

The member for Yeerongpilly drew a notable comparison with the transition of Fraser Island away from sandmining and timber logging towards a thriving, sustainable tourism destination. Given North Stradbroke Island's close proximity to Brisbane, I know Straddie will experience similar successes.

I appreciate that change is not always straightforward. It is not always easy, but changes of this type are inevitable and ultimately unavoidable. The transition has to be made at some point. I believe that communities in other parts of Queensland and Australia will look to North Stradbroke Island as a very encouraging transition model.

I thank members for a vigorous debate. I am optimistic about the future of the island as a cultural and tourism asset, a thriving holiday destination and a much loved place to live. I would encourage those members who have reservations about protecting the natural and cultural values of the island to take a holiday. I think they might need one. In fact, I would recommend that they get down to Cleveland, jump on the Stradbroke Flyer and experience the natural splendour for themselves.

Ms Trad: There's a little baby whale shark there.

Dr MILES: While they are there they can see the baby whale shark and enjoy a gelato at the point.

The bill paves the way towards a diverse and sustainable island economy that protects areas of outstanding natural and cultural heritage value for future generations to enjoy. In the words of the member for Algeester, 'It is time. It is time to draw a line in the sand and let the island get on with a successful transition away from mining.' On this I agree with the member for Dalrymple: it is time to put the uncertainty of the past five years behind us and move towards a more sustainable tomorrow. I commend this bill to the House.