




Speech By
Verity Barton

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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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**

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (11.06 pm): I rise to oppose both the government's bill and also the private member's bill with respect to sandmining on North Stradbroke Island. At the outset, I would like to thank the people of North Stradbroke Island for their great hospitality when I was a serving member of the Finance and Administration Committee. It was the people of North Stradbroke Island who should have the opportunity to have a say, and it was the people of North Stradbroke Island who I believe made it very clear to the committee that 2019 is simply too early to end sandmining.

Every single day, members of this government claim that all they care about is jobs, but what we have seen is that the only jobs they care about are the jobs of the members for Mount Coot-tha, Ashgrove and South Brisbane and the other members who rely on Greens preferences in order to be in this House. What we see very clearly is that this government does not care about the workers in the sand mine. It does not care about the people who rely on employment as a result of small business. It does not care about the people who work for any of the transportation companies that rely heavily on the business that Sibelco provides them. We have seen very, very clearly today and over many days the hypocrisy of this government when it comes into this House and says—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Member, please do not use unparliamentary language.

Miss BARTON: We have seen very, very clearly that this government is disingenuous when it comes into this House and says that all it does is care about jobs and is wanting to create jobs for Queenslanders. If it did, then it would not be tearing out the heart and the guts of the North Stradbroke Island economy. We have seen very clearly that this is what they are doing with this bill.

The best way we can describe this bill is that it is a job-destroying bill because that is exactly what it does. The government are acquiescing to the left, the far left and the Greens so that they can protect the nine seats they won at the 2015 election solely and wholly on the basis of Greens preferences. We know that the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, the member for Mount Coot-tha, is one of those members. We know as well that the member for South Brisbane, the Deputy Premier, needed to rely on Greens preferences in order to retain her seat at the 2015 election. Those are the only jobs that this government clearly care about.

One of the things that I was particularly struck by, Madam Deputy Speaker—and I am sure you, yourself, were too, because we served on the Finance and Administration Committee at the same time—was the bravery of people in the Indigenous community who were prepared to stand up for their community. They were prepared to stand up for their people who want a job that is going to allow them

to live and work in their own community. They were prepared to stand up and fight for what they want and for their beliefs in the face of intimidation from other members of the North Stradbroke Island community. What we are hearing from the government today is that they do not care about the hundreds of workers at Sibelco. They do not care about the hundreds of families that are impacted by this decision. They do not care about the impact on small business. They do not care about the impact on tourism. What they do care about, as I said, are the jobs of the members for Mount Coot-tha and South Brisbane.

We had an extraordinary scene when the Australian Workers' Union, who alongside the Labor Party are supposed to be the bastion of workers in this state, stood up very publicly and criticised this government because they are not representative of the people that the Labor Party claims to represent. Over a number of years the Australian Workers' Union have made significant contributions to the Australian Labor Party. In the lead-up to the last state election they made contributions to the member for Stretton's campaign, who served on the Finance and Administration Committee during its consideration of the bill. They made contributions to the member for Lytton's campaign. They made contributions to the member for Mackay's campaign. They also made contributions to the campaigns against the member for Coomera, who was at the time serving as the deputy chair of this committee. They made contributions against both the members for Gaven and Whitsunday. If honourable members take a look at the register of members' interests they will see that the member for Woodridge has an affiliation with the AWU, the member for Sandgate does, the member for Gladstone does, the member for Redcliffe does, the Premier does, the member for Stretton does and the member for Logan does. But where are those people standing up for the workers? They are abandoning the people who got them into this place. They are abandoning the people whom they say they represent, all in the face of seeking to protect the member for South Brisbane and Deputy Premier because that is their only focus. They do not care about the families who are going to be destroyed. They do not care about the Indigenous workers in the mine. This is according to families to whom I spoke. This is an opportunity for them—

Mr RYAN: I rise to a point of order. It is a practice of this House that members should not make a comment about whether members speak or not speak on a particular bill. I have just listened to the member for Broadwater list a whole number of members who may or may not be speaking on the bill.

An opposition member: You can—

Mr RYAN: No, that is disorderly and I ask for her to withdraw those comments.

Miss BARTON: On the point of order, perhaps the member is hard of hearing, but that is not what I said. I simply said that they are affiliated with the AWU. Those members may choose to make a contribution. I made no reference to whether or not they would—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! There is no point of order.

Miss BARTON: Clearly, the members of the government are feeling just a little bit sensitive about this tonight, because they do not want to be reminded that they are ignoring the people whom they seek to represent and whom they say they are very proud to represent. Clearly they are a little bit touchy tonight.

As I said, we had the opportunity when we were on the Finance and Administration Committee to hear from Indigenous workers at the mine. I remember people saying to me—looking me in the eye and saying—'This government is ripping opportunity away from my family. This is the only opportunity that I and my family have to have a well-paying job on this island that allows me to be part of the community that I am proud to call home, and for the Indigenous workers it allows them to have a well-paying job on their traditional land.' I appreciate that there are divergent points of view—absolutely—there always will be, and the make-up of this House is a reflection of that. However, it is incredibly naive to assume that QYAC is the only body that can speak for the Indigenous people of this island. Overwhelmingly, what I heard from the Indigenous people is that they want sandmining to continue past 2019 because, one, they want to ensure that they have an opportunity for gainful employment; two, they want to ensure that the economy of North Stradbroke Island is strong; and, three, they are very, very clear about the fact that—not only the Indigenous people of North Stradbroke Island, but the broader North Stradbroke Island community—the transition time which has been allowed by this government is not long enough. When the Bligh government made changes in 2011 it said at the time that eight years was an appropriate transition period, so why now must we have a transition period of three years? Very clearly the people of North Stradbroke Island are worried about what this is going to mean for their economy, what this will mean for the families who live on the island who want to be a part of the island community, what this will mean for businesses whose entire livelihood is dependent on Sibelco requiring not only machinery to be transported over to the island but also workers transported over to the island.

I am very conscious that I do not have much time remaining. I want to particularly pay tribute to the member for Cleveland. Nobody could doubt that the member for Cleveland has been an incredibly strong advocate for the people of North Stradbroke Island. That is reflected in the fact that the people of North Stradbroke Island supported the member for Cleveland and voted overwhelmingly for the member for Cleveland at the 2015 election. That is proof that the member for Cleveland is a representative voice of the people of North Stradbroke Island because they have overwhelmingly put their trust and faith in the LNP.

When I was on the island we had an opportunity to hear from people who were opposed to sandmining continuing past 2019. They were people who did not live on the island. They were not people who were representative of the island. They were people who sought to be representative of the island. I believe that they were misleading the committee because, as I say, they were not representative of the island. The people who live on the island who are directly affected by this, overwhelmingly, is the voice that we should listen to.

I would just leave the House with one comment that struck me the first time I visited North Stradbroke Island. It was from an Indigenous person who is very concerned about what this decision will mean for their economy and for the Indigenous people. This person said very clearly to me that it is about closing the gap, not closing the mine. We need to make sure that the Indigenous community on North Stradbroke Island and across Queensland have an opportunity for gainful, well-paid employment, have an opportunity to access that in their own community and on their land and have access to a quality education and quality health care. It is about closing the gap, not the mine. I oppose these bills.