



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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## **RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT (FEES) AMENDMENT REGULATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.45 pm): It was with some grimacing that we had to sit through the contribution of the poor member for Capalaba. I have to assure the member that it is great you can go against a party to get all those wonderful announcements for the electorate. It is great to see the pork-barrelling is back to where it needs to be. I want to go back to some of the contributions. There is no way you can spin that this new big tax is somehow going to solve the problems of all the inland tracks and pay for all this infrastructure. As the member for Clayfield said, anyone who spends any time on any of our beaches in any of our national parks will know that the money is not hitting the ground.

For example, I can tell the House that the roads on Fraser Island have only got increasingly worse over 20 years. The environmental degradation continues. For years, not one cent has been spent on the tracks that we bump along on. They talk about deaths over there. There is no way that you can justify and try to spin a yarn that this is somehow going to fix the Quandamooka people's lot or, more importantly, the lot of four-wheel drivers.

With access to some of the best beaches in the world, who wouldn't want to get out there and go on an off-road adventure with friends and family? Beach driving is a great adventure and provides affordable holidays for many Queenslanders. That same opportunity has now got a lot more expensive with the new Stradbroke Island tax. That is why I am supporting the disallowance motion on this subordinate legislation. It should be disallowed because it is a bad tax and will create a bad situation for all involved.

In Queensland, we are lucky to enjoy a number of great sandy driving locations. Many of these popular recreation areas are within or adjacent to national parks. From North Straddie all the way up to Fraser Island, we are always subject to the department's influence—an ever-increasing influence in our lives. This new Straddie tax is going to have a big effect on tourism and jobs on the island, as has been said here this evening. Can members believe that there was no consultation with businesses, residents or families who enjoyed the connection with Straddie? Worse still, the local council was left in the dark. I believe that Labor are so quick to increase taxes and charges on everyday Queenslanders that they do not even know what good governance or consultation is. Many have spoken out about this new tax; it is not just us on this side. The owner of Straddie Kingfisher Tours, Dave, said that people who had been visiting the island for 20 years had previously told him this would be the last year they would visit because of the increasing costs.

Labor's tax will drive up costs for the island's residents and drive away the visitors and the local experience. This is another problem that this long-suffering community is dealing with, including the botched transition from sand mining. We have heard many times in this place over the last five years about the problems associated with the North Stradbroke Island transition when the mine shuts down. There may be some administrative reason being used to justify this big new tax, but slugging the island with taxes is not an economic strategy. It does not grow tourism numbers or create jobs, and it certainly

does not create an environment of hope for the future. That hope included promises of a \$5 million transition fund back in 2016 for workers on Straddie. We know now that only 10 per cent has been allocated. We have to wonder what is going on.

I know the member for Capalaba tried to spin a yarn this afternoon. However, honourable members should remember that the member for Capalaba slammed his own government on Twitter saying it was a poor decision that goes against everything that would attract tourism.

I turn now to the Redlands mayor, Councillor Karen Williams. I do not know the mayor, but I believe she is a lot more attuned to the community than some of those members who have made a contribution this evening. She said that the decision was symptomatic of a government not understanding the need to engage with the community. That is pretty damning evidence from a mayor who obviously understands the true ramifications.

Issues of increased costs to access our many beaches in Queensland are nothing new, but there is a common theme of successive Labor governments in terms of revenue raising. Many of us who enjoy recreational activities on our beaches and national parks can attest that they are not maintaining those sand roads or providing the infrastructure in a lot of those key areas. It is important to discuss the fees and the taxes because we have issues on Straddie and many others areas in Queensland that need attention. If we are going to get revenue from a big new tax, let's deal with some of the areas and challenges that should be addressed.

On behalf of those four-wheel-drive clubs that have approached us, I say that we need to deal with vehicle sizes on roads. Larger vehicles cause a lot more damage. Axle loading impacts heavily on the sand roads, and road maintenance has been spun here this evening. I can assure honourable members that there has been a lot of exacerbation in terms of the amount of sedimentation runoff, particularly in those areas that are not being maintained and have not been maintained for a long time.

We know that in Queensland there are plenty of new taxes. Who would worry about another new tax on top of the \$3.5 billion worth that Queenslanders are already being slugged? Along with the big new Straddie tax we could talk about the LNG royalties, \$500 million; three separate land tax hikes, \$1 billion; payroll tax, half a million dollars; betting tax, \$366 million; property investors tax, \$132 million; car tax—and on it goes. Who could forget the waste levy of \$1.3 billion? The cost of doing business in Queensland is now getting too expensive, and we know that. With 10 new taxes ripping all these billions of dollars out of the community, what else could the people of Straddie expect?

We have to oppose the government continually putting out its hand. I cannot believe how many times we hear that we can afford to pay a little bit more. We have guaranteed no new taxes, something of which we are really proud. It was interesting that earlier members talked about Sibelco and about the Quandamooka people. We all have a transition goal and aspiration that we share. However, I cannot believe that the 300 Sibelco workers are now down to a hundred and only 10 per cent of the transition money has flowed. That is really despicable.

There have been conversations tonight about comparable fees. We know that the businesses are going to do it really tough. The government cannot keep dealing with this economy in this way. This transition is failing. The utilisation experience is already too expensive, as we have heard tonight. It is really important that we get back to basics about what is good taxation or good areas of expertise in our national parks.

I have to say again tonight that the government could have spoken a lot more seriously about the implications of this instead of trying to spin a yarn that somehow the maintenance of the island or the opportunities for the Quandamooka people are going to be better, because clearly that is not the case. Evidence points out that we are not even on the right track in terms of what are the economic drivers for Straddie. As we know, this is a big, new tax on Queenslanders. It should be disallowed for all the right reasons.