




Speech By
Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

Record of Proceedings, 9 March 2021

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

North Stradbroke Island

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (2.25 pm): I rise to address the worrying and deteriorating situation on North Stradbroke Island and to respond to the government's head-in-the-sand attitude to my referral of government spending on Straddie to the Queensland Auditor-General's office. Life on idyllic Straddie has become more dysfunctional in recent years with things like the surf school children being turned away from tent camping grounds; low-income families with tent bookings at Easter being cancelled; campers outraged as grounds and beaches are closed; the unpopular development being forced at a pristine part of Point Lookout headlands; Quandamooka leaders in dispute with the state government and having to set up a very public tent embassy to stop an unpopular development at the beautiful headlands site; closures of popular beaches and iconic areas to the public; secret land plans that may involve Chinese government backed developers; hikes in four-wheel drive beach access fees; mass job losses; cuts to marine infrastructure like the Howard Walker Jetty in Dunwich; cuts to funding to the chamber of commerce, and more.

What is clear is the Palaszczuk government failed to plan for the economic transition post resource industry and failed to listen and consult widely and communicate clearly on the changes coming through from that and native title and, as a result, the 'Trad-broke' Island plan, as it has become known on Straddie, has created a mess. In short, the beautiful Straddie is in a mess—a mess of the state government's making—and the government still has not learned that tourism is not a tap. It cannot be just turned on and off. Premier, it is not good enough and I call on the Premier to get involved personally and fix her mess.

This morning the minister had a chance to admit the truth and fess up to the mess. However, in question time I asked the environment minister, Minister Scanlon, a question about the latest government grants of around \$22 million—taxpayer funded grants—being paid to QYAC and what taxpayers were getting for this large amount of public moneys. The minister could have proudly proclaimed all of the things the government built, but she could not because there is little to show for it. The answer is either poor administration or maladministration or potential corruption. The fitness of QYAC to continue to co-govern is under question.

I further asked the minister if maintaining tent camping was a requirement so that all Queensland families can enjoy Stradbroke island. The minister in her answer seemed to suggest that reports of Straddie camping restrictions were not accurate. What we saw in the parliament was an out-of-touch environment minister in an even more out-of-touch long-term state Labor government. The minister could have owned up and said that, like the government's child protection system is broken and needs fixing, the government's plan for Straddie is in a mess and needs cleaning up, with a commitment to do it better and different to clean up the mess it made. Instead, the minister stuck her head in the sand—no pun intended—but it is not Straddie sand, because if it was she would have been close enough to hear the shouting of Straddie locals through the sand for this government to start listening to them.

The minister in her answer also mentioned the investigation by ORIC, the federal investigation—she called it an investigation—into the finances of QYAC. After calling it an investigation, she then contradicted herself and downgraded it to a routine examination with the impression that there is nothing to look at. It would be a pity if the ORIC audit was kept to very narrow terms of reference as the minister wants and, as a result of the narrow scope itself, it found nothing. I can only hope that ORIC investigators will allow all of the financial information, especially from the Queensland hearings in 2020, and all of the financial facts to be looked at, so it was interesting that the minister talked down the ORIC audit. Was she hoping to intimidate the state Auditor-General to stay out of it in case he investigates and finds something?

The government obviously would fear the Auditor-General independently looking at the claims by Quandamooka leaders and other community leaders of a lack of outcomes for the massive millions invested through QYAC and in QYAC's performance and claims of financial irregularities. I note that when these questions have been asked and financial documents produced, a former QYAC CEO denied all claims and then surprisingly and without warning resigned and left his post at a critical time. Was he running when the axe was about to fall? There are many questions being asked by Quandamooka leaders about the operations of QYAC, but no-one is providing detailed answers, just glib denials. The CEO came out of hiding today and made a dismissive statement that it was just muckraking. Well, CEO, it is not muckraking. If anything, we are cleaning up your muck.

The government has refused to act, so I have. There seems only one way to get to the bottom of things and restore confidence and that is a performance audit by the Queensland Audit Office. If it finds serious irregularities then QYAC's chair and senior board members should follow the CEO and resign so we can have a fresh start. I table this document.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 5 March 2021, from the member for Oodgeroo, Dr Mark Robinson MP, to the Auditor-General, Queensland Audit Office, Mr Brendan Worrall, regarding a performance audit of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation [280](#).