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Stradbroke Island sand-off costs \$1b

JOHN MCCARTHY

THE closure of sand mining on Stradbroke Island would cost the regional economy up to \$1 billion over 16 years, according to a report from Deloitte Access Economics.

And the mining industry claims the controversial plan to close the mine would cripple the island's economy.

Deputy Premier Jackie Trad (pictured) defended the plan and said the Government's transition strategy would deliver 151 direct and ongoing jobs on North Stradbroke Island.

"Deloitte's analysis shows mining workers, with the training and support provided through the Queensland Government's NSI Sand Mining Workers Assistance Scheme, are well suited to transition to construction jobs, including those that will become available with the start of the Toondah Harbour development on the mainland," Ms Trad said.

The Toondah project is

still waiting for Federal Government environmental approval, but if it goes ahead it would create about 500 jobs a year post-construction.

The Deloitte report was handed to an investigating parliamentary committee in April after Department of State Development bureaucrats had previously refused to hand it over.

It found that not only would there be a huge economic impact but that most of the 140 workers who would lose their jobs at the Sibelco mine were at an age where it would be difficult for them to find other work or move to where work was available.

The loss of those jobs would represent a 20 per cent reduction in the number of jobs on the island.

And the parliamentary committee report on a Katter's Australian Party Bill said it could not "be ignored that the proposed legislation will impact the wider community".

There was strong community criticism of the Gov-

ernment over its handling of the decision and the lack of consultation, but the committee said the Government's approach to consultation in this instance "was not unusual and indeed may have been adequate in other policy circumstances".

But it said the Government should have done a formal study, known as a regulatory impact statement, on the impacts of the decision to end mining.

Mining industry advocate AMMA said the planned closure of the mine in 2019 "would cripple the economy and harm the community of North Stradbroke Island, potentially beyond repair".

