



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Wednesday, 6 April 2011

NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY BILL

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (5.16 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker—

Ms Jones: You want to govern Queensland, have a policy.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms Jones: No policy—a policy-free zone. You stand for nothing.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, the member for Cleveland has the call.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your protection from an out-of-line minister.

Mr Horan: I used to have a cocky that sounded like that—squawk, squawk, squawk. Like a budgerigar.

Ms Jones: You stand for nothing—nothing at all. You don't even stand for yourselves.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, people! It's getting late. Now, the member for Cleveland has the call.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your protection. The minister seems to want another say. North Stradbroke Island is a beautiful and scenic island with a great local community of approximately 2,500 residents. I am privileged today to be the local member of parliament for the residents of North Stradbroke Island and to be charged with looking out for their interests and the environment in which they live.

Straddie is a place of immense scenic beauty, from the views from Point Lookout to Blue Lake and Keyhole Lake and golden beaches. But the most precious jewel of all on the island are its people—Indigenous and non-Indigenous, children, youth, parents, mums and dads, families, seniors, workers, local shop owners, miners, fishermen. All kinds of everyday people are the most precious asset of North Stradbroke Island.

Straddie has a sizeable local population, a significant local economy and substantial infrastructure including roads, schools, police stations, aged-care facilities et cetera. The continuation of these services and maintenance and further development of this infrastructure is vital to the island's future. The island also has regular ferry and barge services. Local residents are completely reliant on these services for transport related to work, buying goods and sending children to mainland schools—be that their choice. Tourism is also a significant aspect of Straddie life, with thousands of tourists visiting every year.

Simplistic comparisons of North Stradbroke Island to Fraser Island and Moreton Island have been made by this government and they only seek to blur an understanding of the uniqueness of North Stradbroke Island. North Stradbroke Island is equally beautiful and attractive to Fraser Island and Moreton Island. However, Straddie is different in that it has a sizeable local community and local economy. Further, its economy historically has been underpinned by, and its development dependent upon, sandmining.

Sandmining provides more than 250 direct jobs, 350 indirect jobs and \$130 million of economic benefit to the region.

Sibelco, formerly Unimin, and CRL have been good corporate, sociocultural and environmental citizens of the island such that today the vast majority of island residents have a positive view of the role of the sandmine.

Over the past two years I have regularly visited the island and spent much time listening to residents' concerns and views—from Cleveland and Toondah Harbour, Dunwich, Amity Point and Point Lookout, from prospective national park areas, camping grounds, beaches, whale-watching areas and as many different parts of the island as I could travel to. I have spent much time with all kinds of people from diverse walks of life so that I could do my best to understand their views and represent them and their interests when bills such as the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Bill come before the House. It is a pity this government has not spent the same time and energy listening to local views.

It is interesting to note that the member for Ashgrove, in her occasional trips and visits out to the island, has not even visited one of the key stakeholders in this whole issue—that is, the mining company Sibelco. She has not even visited the mine. She has not gone with them with their permission to the rehabilitation sites. She has not stood in front of the miners and asked them, 'What do you think about losing your jobs?'

Over the past two years as their local MP I have consistently spoken about issues affecting the residents. I have come into this chamber on many occasions to represent them on matters that affect them as everyday Queenslanders and also on specific contextual island issues such as national parks, Indigenous rights, ecotourism, koalas and other wildlife, environmental issues, fishing and marine infrastructure, camping, local business issues, transport and various other areas. So I again rise today to represent the North Stradbroke Island community of 2,500 residents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, because their cries have been completely ignored by this state government. I repeat: they have been completely ignored by this government, by the Premier and by the uncaring member for Ashgrove. Both the member for Ashgrove and the Premier have shown very little interest in what the people actually want and need. They have neglected the residents of North Stradbroke Island continuously. If that is the level of concern the member of Ashgrove shows towards—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms O'Neill): Order! You will refer to the minister by her correct title, please.

Dr ROBINSON: The member for Ashgrove?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: She is the Minister for Environment.

Dr ROBINSON: Okay, the Minister for Environment. If the Minister for Environment treats the constituents of her electorate of Ashgrove in the way she has treated the members of North Stradbroke Island, I would encourage those people in Ashgrove to look for a better alternative—because they can do. There is a better alternative to the current member for Ashgrove, and I look forward to the day that he comes into this House as the member for Ashgrove.

The stated primary objective of the bill is to substantially end sandmining activities, including all heavy mineral sandmining, in the North Stradbroke Island region—which is North Stradbroke and Peel islands—by the end of 2013 and to end all mining in the region by 2025. The purpose of this is said to be to protect and restore the environmental values of the region and to facilitate the staged creation of areas that are to be jointly managed by the state and the traditional owners of the region.

The true purpose of the bill requires a third point that I would like to suggest, and I think this is really the overriding aim and objective of this bill. The third aim is to shore up Greens preferences in urban electorates, like Ashgrove, so that the Premier and Labor MPs can cling on to power. This is the true reason for the Straddie sell-out: dirty backyard deals with the extreme left of the Labor Party, the Greens—the Greens that are controlling many Labor policies at both state and federal level.

I cannot support the government's North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Bill 2011 for many reasons. First, it impacts negatively on all families who live and work on the island. Up to 600 jobs—both mining and other jobs—will be lost and not replaced under the government's current transition plan. That includes 50 Indigenous jobs, which are mainly local, and this impacts on 50 Indigenous families. Most of those who will lose their jobs will find it difficult to find other work on the island. It will be a challenging thing for people who have been involved in the mining industry for many years to transition to hospitality and tourism jobs. It will be a difficult ask for many and some will not want to do that at all. They will exchange high-paying jobs, good jobs, for jobs that are often more temporary, more casual and seasonal—even though many jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry are good jobs.

We as an opposition support ecotourism and support extending and expanding the hospitality and tourism industries on North Stradbroke Island. We will be big supporters of that, but you cannot say that miners will automatically make that transition. I have met a lot of miners over my time, and many of them would not really want to transfer from their industry that they know so well. For example, machine operators would perhaps have to get a job standing behind a desk and taking customers' details for whale-

watching trips or something like that. That is a very good activity. However, many of them would feel unsuited, many of them would feel that they could not be trained to make that transition and some of them just would not want to do that.

This is not a good plan. It is not a well-thought-through plan in terms of jobs transition, and the member for Ashgrove could not care less. The member for Ashgrove could not care less about the men and women who are going to lose their jobs, who will not have an income, who will become welfare dependent. She does not care at all. She has not even visited the mine. She has not even visited the miners. She has not stood before them and explained to them why they will no longer have employment. I challenge the minister today to get out of her little Ashgrove centre and come out to the island, visit the mine, meet with the 250 miners and explain to them why their jobs are less important than hers. It is very clear today that the member for Ashgrove does not care about the jobs of miners. She sold out the blue-collar worker. She does not care about jobs.