



Speech By
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**NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY AND
ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (9.50 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the government's North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Another Act Amendment Bill. This bill, introduced by Minister Cripps on behalf of the Newman LNP government, does four main things for the people of North Stradbroke Island in fulfilment of a promise made at the 2012 election. Firstly, it saves over 2,000 Straddie residents from Anna Bligh's economic recession that would have shut down Straddie. Secondly, it protects 600 direct and indirect jobs and 109 small businesses from the former Labor government's plan. A good number of these jobs that are protected are held by Indigenous people. Between 50 and 60 jobs on a regular basis are held by Quandamooka families. In terms of jobs, this new path under this legislation provides additional safety for those workers in those jobs. Thirdly, this bill delivers a secure and prosperous future for the Quandamooka people by giving them certainty about the Indigenous land use agreement and native title. The fact that no change to the Indigenous land use agreement is required or happens through this legislation makes their future secure and prosperous. Fourthly, this bill supports the plan for a well-managed national park and the continuation of high environmental standards.

In 2011 the Bligh Labor government introduced a bill to substantially end sandmining activities by the end of 2019—just a few short years away. That bill had disastrous consequences for the residents of North Stradbroke Island. This bill that we are debating today goes a long way to correcting the problems created by the former Bligh government. It fulfils a 2012 election commitment from Premier Campbell Newman and the LNP to the residents of Straddie. The bill was needed to reverse the man-made recession that the Bligh Labor government brought upon the 2,000-plus residents of Straddie in June 2010 and then legislated in 2011 as part of a dirty deal for preferences with the extreme Greens.

In June 2010, without warning, Anna Bligh flew in and dropped a bombshell on island residents: the unwanted news that she was going to end sandmining within a short period of time, a bombshell that over the past two years has sent the island into recession—another Labor recession that we had to have. Does that ring true to anybody? In 2011-12, ending the mine dramatically early sent the local economy into a downward spiral. The proof of the pudding of Labor's failed plan is in the eating. House prices dropped. Houses could not be sold at auction. At one auction over 50 houses and properties were put up for sale and only one sold. New jobs became scarce. Some small businesses started to struggle. Some banks became nervous about new and even current investments and would not extend credit. The high school campus was on its knees and would later have to close. Straddie ferries prepared for a downsizing. As locals feared, Straddie started to shut down. The Labor-Greens recession that Straddie had to have was underway. It is amazing that Labor leaders do not learn that Australians do not like government made recessions. In fact, earlier this year former Prime Minister Paul Keating visited Straddie as a guest speaker at the QYAC AGM—an AGM that I was not invited

to; it seems it was only for Labor members. So maybe it is just that recession follows him wherever he goes.

I will give members some background to North Stradbroke Island. To understand the devastation that former Premier Bligh's political deal with the Greens wreaked on the residents of Straddie and to understand how our bill protects and secures the future for residents it is important to know some of the background. As I have stated before in this House, North Stradbroke Island is a beautiful and scenic island with a great local community of over 2,000 permanent residents. Straddie has a significant population and a local economy with substantial infrastructure including roads, schools, police stations and aged-care facilities. The continuation of these services and maintenance and further development of this infrastructure is vital to the island's future. Tourism is also a significant aspect of Straddie life, with thousands of tourists visiting every year. It is important to note that, until recent times, the local economy was strong and vibrant and was underpinned, and its development dependent upon, sandmining. Sandmining provided up to 600 direct and indirect jobs and poured \$130 million of economic benefits into North Stradbroke Island.

Sibelco, formerly Unimin and CRL, have been good corporate and environmental citizens, pouring profits into many local projects of great value to the local people. Those projects include building infrastructure such as the One Mile public pontoon, roads, electricity infrastructure and sociocultural and Indigenous initiatives. They have been good local citizens. Sibelco has also been committed to environmental priorities, such as the rehabilitation of land and revegetation to the world's best and award-winning standards. The revegetation work was so good that it fooled Anna Bligh and Kate Jones, although that is no mean feat, to designating already mined areas as pristine national park. Their decision with respect to this national park is testament to the high environmental standards used by this mining company.

Over the past 4½ years I have spent much time with island residents and groups to understand their views in order to represent them in this House. I have spoken with miners and mining families and asked them about the impact of the mine closure on them, which was something afforded to them that no Labor MP afforded them. Anna Bligh never visited Sibelco and the miners. Kate Jones never bothered to front up to miners and tell them why they were going to lose their jobs. It was a cowardly act against workers on the island. Many of them tore up their Labor Party membership and today you can barely find a Labor Party member on the island. They felt so betrayed. They tore up their union cards and took it out on the Labor Party very clearly in the 2012 election. Some miners stated that neither former Premier Bligh nor DERM minister Kate Jones ever visited them. They were outraged that Anna Bligh and Kate Jones would not stand up for their jobs. Others pointed out that they could not understand how a Labor government could alter a mine path in such a way to create additional risk to workers. The Kate Jones DERM manipulated mine path would send the Enterprise mine through unsafe areas that would put miners at risk. This bill amends the mine path and makes it safer for workers.

What does the research show about local support for the LNP government's plan? The LNP formed its response as early as July 2010. Our view was based on community feedback that showed that the majority of island residents did not support Anna Bligh's plan to shut down Straddie. Then when Campbell Newman became leader he respected the views of the local residents and endorsed the existing plan. Now, the Premier, through this legislation, is implementing the plan that was promised. Since July 2010, island residents have been surveyed and petitioned and around 85 per cent of them rejected Anna Bligh's plan and wanted the extension of sandmining. A local petition was signed by 1,517 people opposing the former government's decision to end sandmining. The Straddie Chamber of Commerce, which represents 109 small businesses, says that a huge majority of businesses support extending sandmining.

I want to make a brief comment about the committee process. I want to thank the chair and the committee members for their scrutiny of the bill. After full consideration of all submissions, all representations at the public hearings and departmental briefings, the majority finding of the committee was to support the bill. I thank them for that.

In the committee stage there was an issue in relation consultation. While time does not allow me to elaborate in great detail about the issue of consultation, there has been extensive consultation since July 2010 with all stakeholders and I am very happy to table my communication record of my contact with the Quandamooka Indigenous group and QYAC representatives over 2012 and 2013 to show the many opportunities for discussion and many meetings that took place and the fact that there had been a thorough consultation.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Communication record of Mark Robinson MP with Quandamooka groups since start of LNP government 2012-2013' [\[4116\]](#).

There is huge Indigenous benefit in terms of jobs. I have mentioned benefit to the local Indigenous people. There are huge benefits in terms of securing a prosperous future for the Quandamooka. Environmental standards remain high. In conclusion, as the local member for North Stradbroke Island residents, I support the bill along with the 2,000-plus residents of North Stradbroke Island. On behalf of the people of Straddie, I thank the Premier, Minister Cripps and the government for saving Straddie from being shut down by the Bligh Labor government and delivering on the election promise that we made of a more orderly transition to a non-sandmining future.