



The Friends of Stradbroke Island Association Inc.

Newsletter No. 57 April 2010

FOSI was formed in 1988 to oppose the construction of inappropriate development at Cylinder Beach. FOSI continues to monitor proposals for this site, and others on North Stradbroke Island, with the aim of preserving the island's unique features: coastal villages, remarkable landscape and beaches, and areas of significant vegetation and wildlife. Membership is open to those who support FOSI's aims.

MEMBERSHIP RATES, 2009: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00

The postal address of FOSI is PO Box 167, Point Lookout Qld 4183.

Island life. . .



Beach breakfast. . . silver gulls fight for a morsel on Frenchman's Beach (above).



Into the storm. . . A crested tern on Deadman's Beach (above).

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NATIONAL PARK NOT MINING

In 1990, the Goss Labor Government considered it appropriate that at least 50 per cent of North Stradbroke Island be declared national park. It did not happen. Less than 2% of the Island around Blue Lake - national park since the 1960's - is protected. Over half of the Island is under mining lease, with the public excluded under threat of prosecution and mining destroying a valuable natural asset.



Let's stop mining before more of our island is gouged out. . . North Stradbroke Island mining operations from the air. (Photo courtesy of Peter W. Glynn. Photographer Terry Magee).

The needs of Greater Brisbane

Given greater Brisbane's need for more public green space and the fact that about 20 of the mining leases have expired or are due to expire soon, it makes sense to bring mining to an end and declare most of the Island national park without delay.

Since 1990 the population of greater Brisbane has doubled. Government policy appears to support population growth at unprecedented rates, despite infrastructure struggling to cope.

Premier Anna Bligh's website recognizes the acute need for more national park and public green space – it records that greater Sydney has 49% public green space, while our area is only 19%. Even Melbourne far exceeds this with 33%.

Cont. p.2

National park or mining cont.

Declaring the Island national park will help redress this imbalance.

The expired mining leases – a unique opportunity exists

An unprecedented opportunity exists – with mining leases that have expired, and more expiring soon. Renewal of the expired leases is being considered by the Government, which under the Mineral Resources Act can refuse to renew with no compensation payable to the mining company- Unimin Australia Limited, which is owned by a Belgian family through a US holding company.

Two of the expired leases are very large - ML's 1117 & 1121. Together they comprise 6,019 hectares. 1117 is the key lease. If it is renewed, ancient dunes and pristine old growth forests in the proposed path of the mine will be destroyed.

By not renewing these leases the Government can also bring to an end costly litigation resulting from an appeal by the mining company against the **unanimous** decision of the Redland City Council in August 2008. The Council refused to permit the company to remove and sell to the construction industry an additional 500,000 tonnes of sand per year from these two leases. The Government has stated that it supports the Council's decision.

North Stradbroke Island is a standout option for national park because not only is it accessible to the largest concentration of Queensland's population but, importantly, the Government already owns the land so there is no cost in buying it for national park.

There is also an opportunity to give the Island's indigenous population, many of whom have a 15-year-old unresolved native title claim, an opportunity to be employed and otherwise engaged in preserving and co-managing their

traditional lands, as has occurred with national parks in the Northern Territory and north Queensland.



Off limits ... mining leases restrict public access to places like this.

Nature-based tourism is the future for NSI

It is almost universally recognized that nature based tourism is the future – yet mining continues to destroy this.

Tourists are attracted to intact landscapes formed over many thousands of years. Some of the sand dune systems that mining completely destroys are 150,000 years old. Similarly, the complex vegetation and other ecosystems that took thousands of years to develop and which mining destroys are unlikely to ever be replicated.

The Island has magnificent freshwater lakes and its wetlands are internationally listed. It is known for its wonderful and diverse array of flora and fauna. For example, the Island's koala population is genetically distinct from the mainland koala and it is the only naturally-occurring Island population, making it unique. At least 244 bird species are known to either inhabit or visit the Island.

In a pre-election letter to Island residents, Premier Anna Bligh indicated her Government believed that North Stradbroke Island..."should be protected and preserved for future generations" .

Cont. p.3

National park or mining cont.

Employment issues

The mining company employs about 250 workers. Fewer than half live on the Island. By 2013, when one of the three mines is scheduled to close, about half of these jobs will go. The Island's mines cannot be compared to the mines of central Queensland. Those mines employ many thousands and contribute vast sums to the State's economy. Retaining mining on the Island makes little economic sense and the profits go overseas. The future value of North Stradbroke Island in terms of tourism and quality of lifestyle for Queenslanders - particularly those in the southeast - lies in protecting and preserving, not destruction.

Mining usually provides transitory employment. But, acknowledging the employment issue, the Queensland Conservation Council and Tangalooma Resort management issued a joint media release last year supporting the establishment of an eco-resort adjoining national park on the Island.

The Tangalooma resort employs between 300 and 400 people, depending on season. A state-of-the-art eco-resort on the bay side of the Island, with guests

brought by boat (as occurs at Tangalooma) could be expected to triple the employment lost by ending mining with minimal impact on the Island's infrastructure. Declaration of the Island as national park would ensure its success. As national park, greater Brisbane's very own 'great walk', running the 33 km length of the Island, is a real possibility.

The government must 'think globally, act locally' by protecting the Island from further destruction and thus make a valuable contribution to the world's environmental challenges.

Its time for national park - not mining - on North Stradbroke Island.

By FOSI President Sue Ellen Carew and Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland president Simon Baltais

For more information go to www.savestraddie.com.

The campaign for national park, not mining is supported by 9 leading environmental groups (see p.4). Recent additions as supporters include the Australian Marine Conservation Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

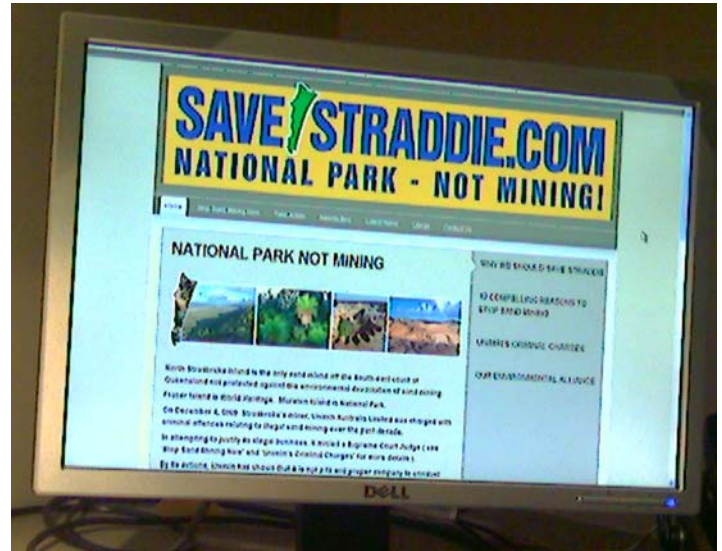
An edited version of this article appeared in the Courier-Mail recently.



Bumped off... The Save Straddie bumper sticker (above) caused a bit of talk on the island during the Christmas holidays when it was handed out with fliers to holiday-makers. Get one for your car at the AGM, by asking a committee member or by requesting one via the website www.savestraddie.com.

Next time you are online check out the savestraddie.com website. You can download information and newsletters, request a bumper sticker and read the latest media clippings. From the site, you can also send an 'eblast' to the Premier calling for the refusal of Unimin's applications to renew around 20 expired mining leases – the first essential step in ending sand mining on the Island. In your email you could make particular mention of expired ML 1117. It expired on 31 October, 2007! Yet mining is continuing to destroy pristine old growth forests in the mine's path.

This is a key part of the campaign to Save Straddie and a great way to get information about Straddie out to the public.



Straddie on the web. . . check out the new SaveStraddie.com website (above).

Newspaper ad keeps pressure on State Government ...this advertisement (below) has appeared in the Courier-Mail a number of times this year to help spread the word about the urgent need to stop mining and save Straddie.

SAVE STRADDIE.COM

NATIONAL PARK - NOT MINING!

North Stradbroke Island is the only Queensland sand island still being damaged by sand mining. Currently, mining leases cover more than 70% of the Island and the public is excluded under threat of prosecution. Many of those leases have expired and the miner Unimin Australia Limited has been charged with criminal offences for illegal sand mining on the Island, yet the mining continues. It is time for the Bligh Government to end sand mining and declare all available land National Park.

For more information and what you can do, go to savestraddie.com

Friends of Stradbroke Island, Queensland Conservation Council, Community Alliance for Responsible Planning (CARP) Redlands, Fraser Island Defenders Organization, Moreton Island Protection Committee, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Australian Marine Conservation Society and Australian Conservation Foundation

In Brief

Donations please!

Our recent activities to help save Straddie from mining have siphoned away money from our bank account.

Despite some very generous donations and provision of some services free-of-charge from our supportive members, we still need some more money for the campaign.

So if you can donate a little bit of money (or a big bit!!) please make out a cheque to FOSI or make an EFT transfer to the FOSI account.

Bunkered down



Silver terns on Frenchman's Beach during the recent wet weather.

Gorge walk update

Congratulations to Redlands City Council on its recent upgrade of the North Gorge Walk – a big improvement!

FOSI report on Logan basin water resource plan draft amendment

In July 2007, the Minister for Natural Resources and Water (now Department of Environment and Resource Management, DERM) started the planning process to amend the Logan Basin water resource plan (WRP). The purpose of the amendment is to incorporate North and South Stradbroke Islands and the southern Moreton Bay into the existing Logan Basin WRP.

A WRP deals with the allocation and sustainable management of water resources to meet future water requirements, and includes provision for the protection of water-dependant ecosystems and security for existing water users.

Part of the amendment process included community involvement through the Community Reference Panel (CRP). Also a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) was established to provide technical guidance and advice. (See December 2007 Newsletter).

The main technical issue that the plan has to answer is how much water could be extracted from the NSI aquifer in a sustainable way. That is, without putting groundwater dependant ecosystems at risk.

The first stage of the process involved TAP reviewing existing work and information, and developing the methodology for the project: the two TAP members were Associate Professor Malcolm Cox (School of Natural Resource Science and Institute of Sustainable Resources, QUT) and Associate Professor Alison Specht (Centre for Coastal Management and School of Environmental Science and Management, SCU). At the same time DERM carried out field investigations and installed additional monitoring. The Stage 1 TAP draft report was released around October 2008.

The following stage of the process involved computer modelling of the NSI aquifer and its interaction with all of the groundwater dependent ecosystems. This work was undertaken within DERM, with the TAP withdrawing from the process. The Stage 2 report draft was released to the CRP for comment in early 2010, but unfortunately, details of the report have been designated “confidential”. However, the work done is a significant contribution to the beginning of an understanding of the NSI aquifer and groundwater dependent ecosystems.

For those interested in more detail, the following web site, www.qld.gov.au/wrp/logan.html contains Newsletters that outline all the stages of the process.

By Paul Vekselstein

In Brief

Date saver – AGM

FOSI's Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 3 April at 2.00 pm at the home of Edith and Duncan McPhee, 14 Booran Street, Point Lookout.

Members are urged to attend and to consider offering themselves for election to the Executive and the Committee. Meeting notices and nomination forms have been mailed to members..

Turtle TV stars

Straddie turtles featured on a television current affairs program last month.

Researchers and NSI resident Jenny Truman say more turtles are nesting on the island as climate change makes their traditional nesting sites further north too hot for eggs to survive.

Report koala sitings

Island resident Jan Aldenhoven is collecting information on historical koala sitings on NSI.

Jan wants details of any past sitings, even 50 years ago! This will help researchers better understand the island koala population, its habitat and how it might be changing.

Send information to: PO Box 255, Point Lookout; or e-mail jan@wildlifefilms.com.au.

Island koalas in the limelight

Protecting south-east Queensland's dwindling koala population is becoming a hot topic. The issue has featured heavily in the media recently. FOSI has made a submission to the State Government calling for urgent action to protect the unique island koalas before it is too late.

North Stradbroke Island (NSI) is the home of a vigorous and healthy population of koalas. There is a low incidence of common koala diseases and research that has been carried out to date shows that they have been genetically isolated for about 8,000 years.

NSI's koalas constitute the only naturally-occurring Island population in Australia. These koalas are unique and deserving of special consideration. Further research may reveal that these koalas hold the key to curing the mainland populations of various common diseases, as NSI's koalas currently appear to be more robust.

NSI has a small (300-1000 individuals) but significant population of koalas that require the highest possible protection by state and local government. The population on NSI faces significant threats from dog attack, vehicle strike, fire, habitat clearing and fragmentation, water reduction to food trees through water extraction from the aquifer and salt water inundation to habitat from sea level rise.

The first island-wide census was only conducted in 2008 so little is known about population size and locations prior to that date. Further, it's not known if the numbers are increasing, decreasing or stable. However given the small population and the threats it faces, its survival chances must be maximized in every way possible.

Mining has caused substantial destruction of koala habitat on the Island. Unfortunately this destruction is continuing. The Government has a unique opportunity to protect and preserve the Island (as the Premier has indicated she wishes to do – in a pre-election letter to Island residents in March 09). Around 20 mining leases have expired or will expire soon. Under s.286A of the Mineral Resources Act, the government can refuse to renew these leases without compensation being payable to the Miner. NSI should be made a Priority Koala Management Area because of the significance of the population, the threats it faces and its small population size.

Unimin faces court on illegal mining charges

Investigations have revealed an alleged multi-million dollar sand mining scam orchestrated by Island sand mining company Unimin Australia Ltd.

The company has been charged with criminal offences alleging that it illegally removed and sold sand for construction and landscaping purposes for the last decade. It did not have a permit under the Forestry Act - required for the sale of non-mineral sand.

The company has not yet been charged with 'stealing' the sand or with 'serious environmental harm' for not using the sand for rehabilitation of legally mined areas. Such charges would allow the Government to recoup the millions of dollars in profits that the company made from its activities, if it is convicted. The existing charges, being non-indictable, do not permit the State to use its confiscation of illegal proceeds legislation.

It was recently revealed by the Government that 50,000 to 100,000 tonnes per year since 1992 has been allegedly removed and sold unlawfully ie. up to 1.8 million tonnes of sand over that period. At a street value of \$50 per tonne, a conservative retail price, this means the extent of the alleged illegality is

simply staggering – in the vicinity of \$80 million dollars.

Unimin claims that it has paid royalties. But as one island resident remarked, "It's like saying its ok to steal a car, if you pay the rego".



Imagine if you or I, with no permit, took an excavator and tip truck to the nearest beach, loaded it up with sand, and then sold it at the local landscaping centre on a Saturday morning. The authorities would shut us down in an instant! It wouldn't matter if we sent the Government a cheque for 90c per tonne for royalties! Yet Unimin and its predecessor ACI apparently got away with it for two decades before the former EPA finally stepped in and stopped it.

The case against Unimin is continuing.



Unimin in court . . . Unimin's NSI operations (above) were under scrutiny when the miner faced court on illegal mining charges. People gathered at the Cleveland Court House in force to protest against mining on the island (top).

Fine music festival will be back on the island soon!

After its first successful seasons in 2007 and 2008, the Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival is back this year, bigger and better than ever!

For three days in June (18th-20th) audiences will be treated to an exciting program of fine music performed by outstanding Australian musicians. And of course there's no better venue for great music than North Stradbroke Island - "Straddie" - with its stunning bushland serenity, beautiful beaches, and "away from it all" atmosphere.



As established in the first seasons, the informality and warmth of these concerts blend perfectly with Straddie's beach-side charm. You can join the performers after the concerts for a chat and a glass of wine, or listen to them prepare at the open rehearsals. And there'll be classes, workshops and special events as well.

The exciting line-up of performers includes talented young musicians from the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the iconic, intriguing Freshwater Trio

from Melbourne. Point Lookout will again be the main venue, but a special feature this year will be a family-focused Saturday afternoon concert at Dunwich Hall where the audience will experience the fun of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf". This concert will also showcase a series of pieces for didjeridu played by virtuoso Harry Wilson.

The Festival's varied music program ranges from rich, much-loved favourites of the classical repertoire to new music at the cutting edge of current composition. In just three days we'll hear the delights of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Chopin, as well as 20th century moderns like Austria's Arnold Schoenberg and Australia's Peter Sculthorpe, right through into the new millennium with Gordon Kerry's piano trio and the tuneful delights of Elena Kats Chernin. And these are only some of the musical treasures on offer! Come for an unforgettable weekend of fine music in a setting of breathtaking natural beauty.

- See the latest updates on the website www.stradmusic.org
- Musical & performer enquiries: Festival Director Rachel Smith, 3892 1575
- Sponsorship: Please call Rachel if you can offer financial support.

Tickets: radio station 4MBS Classic FM, 3847 1717 (9am-5pm, 7 days a week), 4mbs.com.au and Point Lookout News.

**Stradbroke Chamber
Music Festival 2010
18-20 June**

Is your newsletter still arriving by post? If you'd prefer to receive it by email, please send your email address to Edith McPhee at emcphee@westnet.com.au. Thank you

