

Government urged to cancel Unimin's Stradbroke lease



TORN APART: The deep scar left from sand mining operations shows in this aerial image of North Stradbroke Island.

Picture: Adam Head

Sand mining furore

Greg Stolz

GUARDIANS of North Stradbroke Island are calling on the State Government to rip up a mining lease on which millions of dollars of illegal sand mining has allegedly occurred.

The Court of Appeal last week unanimously dismissed an appeal by mining giant Unimin against a Supreme Court ruling that it had mined "non-mineral" sand from the island and unlawfully sold it to the landscape and building industries.

Environmentalists say the Government, which has pledged to phase out sand mining on North Stradbroke and turn much of the island into national park, should immediately cancel the mining lease at the centre of the lost court appeal.



REVELATIONS: Reports in *The Courier-Mail* on sand mining activities on North Stradbroke.

They pointed to evidence that up to 100,000 tonnes of sand a year, valued at more than \$80 million, had been removed from the island over more than a decade and illegally sold off.

"The illegally removed sand should have been used to rehabilitate lawfully mined land

in accordance with Unimin's obligations under the Mineral Resources Act," Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland president Simon Baltais said. "We call on the State Government to cancel Unimin's lease over the 'Vance' mine - the site of these unlawful activities."

The State Government is

prosecuting Unimin for alleged illegal sand mining but North Stradbroke Island watchdogs are campaigning for criminal charges.

Dale Ruska, one of North Stradbroke Island's traditional owners, accused the Government of failing to throw the book at Unimin because of the

royalties paid by the miner. "The State Government collected royalties from unlawful sand sales - are they implicated in this unlawful operation by receiving the economic proceeds of crime and are they trying to cover this up by being soft with their prosecution of the mining company?" Mr Ruska asked.

But acting Sustainability and Climate Change Minister Anastacia Palaszczuk said the Department of Environment and Resource Management believed the current charges against Unimin were adequate.

The Courier-Mail revealed last month that despite the Government pledging to end sand mining on North Stradbroke, mining would be allowed to continue on an expired lease, which is the site of the huge Enterprise mine.