

TALKING POINT

At the moment, much of the island is locked away under mining leases, preventing tourists visiting many attractions
Michael Kennedy, of Point Lookout, says the future of North Stradbroke Island lies in ending sand mining and developing tourism

The Courier Mail **Put Cubbie Station on open market**

CUBBIE Station might be the poster boy for bad water management in the Murray-Darling river system but that shouldn't make it an automatic candidate for government acquisition. Forced to a sale under pressure from bankers, the owners of the sprawling mixed primary production property in the southern reaches of the Condamine-Balonne river system are conducting a brazen campaign to talk up the price of their asset.

But their price tag of \$450 million should not be confused with the value of the water licences which allow for extraction of 70,000ML, a small proportion of the station's storage capacity of 538,000ML. The rest of the water, which accumulates from overland flow, is authorised but not licensed. The point of this is that the value of the property is exaggerated because so much of the water exists under licences which might be issued but have not been.

There is also an argument that buying the water entitlements would do little but move the problem downstream into the Darling River system south of the NSW border. Independent senator Nick Xenophon is right when he says that buying the entitlements from Cubbie would be purchasing water the Government cannot control, which would end up in irrigation catchments downstream and, quite possibly, have to be bought again from other water licence holders. This is neither rational

Island's future is tourism

I REFER to L. Norris's comments about the economy of North Stradbroke Island needing sand mining (Letters, Aug 18).

There already are more jobs on North Stradbroke in the tourism industry than in mining. Consolidated Rutile Ltd employs fewer than 200 people. The company recently announced that this number would halve by 2013.

The problem with the continuation of mining is that it is destroying features of the island which would attract tourists if left untouched.

In other words, if tourists are deterred as a result of the destruction, future jobs in the tourism industry are being destroyed in the process of allowing the mining to continue. For the sake of

relatively few temporary jobs, we are sacrificing many more permanent future jobs.

The bigger picture, however, is that we need more open public space. North Stradbroke Island presents a perfect opportunity. The Government already owns the land. By declining to renew the many expired mining leases and ending sand mining on the island, the Government could declare extensive national park areas and help solve the shortage of open public space. In the process it would save the sensitive environment.

At the moment, much of the island is locked away under mining leases, preventing tourists visiting many attractions. Moving quickly to declare national parks

would result in a growth in tourist numbers and this would help absorb the loss of jobs from ending sand mining.

The choice is simple: save the environment and ensure a healthy tourist industry in the future versus saving temporary jobs which unfortunately are causing irreparable damage to ancient but fragile sand dunes which support complex eco-systems.

On Sunday, the Government announced it had rejected the proposed Inskip Point development because of concern for the sand dune systems and wildlife. Consistency would dictate that it also should save the ancient sand dunes of Stradbroke, which are of at least equal importance.

Michael Kennedy, Point Lookout

IN BRIEF

● IF rugby league authorities are really serious about demonstrating respect for women, the first thing they must do is abolish the teams' dancing squads. No other football code in the country belittles the female gender in this manner. Using young girls to sell a sport is dated and a waste of club funds. League supporters go to the footy to watch footy. I seriously doubt that dancing girls would have any effect on crowd numbers. The NRL should bite the bullet and instruct its clubs to phase out this silly practice.

John Stewart, Chapel Hill

● DON'T buy DVDs from online auction sites. I bought a *Yes Man* DVD online which I'm sure is a pirated copy. The cover said the film was called "Arrr Man".

Brett Wendorf, Sandgate

● COSTCO has opened its first store in Australia. On its website, the company says it has 54.5 million members worldwide. At \$60 a membership per year, it is raking in billions of dollars before even selling any products. No wonder Costco can sell everything cheaper than others.

Kevin Mullane, North Lakes

● HOW progressive of the Gold Coast City Council to require the "Surfers Sandman" (C-M, Aug 18) to have a permit to do his sand sculptures on the beach. What

Give award to dog rescuer

IN a selfless act of bravery, Raden Soemawinata, without thought to his personal safety, jumped into cold and dangerous waters to save Sue Drummond's dog, Bibi (C-M, Aug 17).

Fortunately the outcome was a happy one for Drummond and her dog. Such incidents of bravery deserve to be rewarded. There should be a public presentation to note the appreciation of this

