

TALKING POINT

Stradbroke cannot exist on tourism alone. The cost to get there for a holiday is quite prohibitive for the average wage-earner
Louise Norris, of Cleveland, makes a case for sand mining continuing to boost the island's economy

The Courier-Mail

More clarity needed on decisions

PREMIER Anna Bligh would like Queenslanders to think she acted for all the right reasons in rejecting a proposed \$1.5 billion resort development on the Fraser Coast at Inskip Point. There were, after all, the habitats of rare birds and frogs at stake, no minor consideration for a Government anxious to build on its environmental credentials. But Ms Bligh had to admit that, given the last fortnight of controversy, the public could see the decision as a reaction to the fact that the Rainbow Shores Stage Two development had the fingerprints of a bevy of former Labor lobbyists all over it, including the Premier's current chief-of-staff, Mike Kaiser, and her Planning Minister, Stirling Hinchliffe. Whatever its environmental impact, the Rainbow Shores proposal had been caught up in the political maelstrom over the Government's links to business and how much influence Labor politicians-turned-lobbyists had over its decision making. Despite the serial ineptitude of the Opposition in taking the Government to task over these links - not to mention refusing to reveal the extent of its own links with business in the process - the Government remains vulnerable on this issue. Ms Bligh might have better luck convincing people to accept that environmental considerations drove the decision to knock back the proposal if she confirmed whether similar concerns for the environment were evident in her Government's decision to approve the inclusion of a big parcel of land at Elimbah East near Caboolture into southeast Queensland's urban footprint. That decision followed lobbying efforts by another former Labor figure, Terry Mackenroth, on behalf of the prospective developer, the Indigo Group. It also followed a vocal and sustained campaign against the proposal by the local Moreton Bay Regional Council, partly on environmental grounds. The council was worried what reserving a large area of land for industry would mean for discharges into the ecologically sensitive Pumicestone Passage. The Elimbah East proposal was to turn farmland into industrial land in one fell swoop, without going through the process of investigating the subsequent environmental impact. Yet despite the enormous controversy over its decision, the Government has still not fully explained why it believed this land should be zoned for light industry. Nowhere in the South-East Queensland Regional Plan or in publicly available supporting documentation is there anything but a cursory mention as to why the rezoning decision was made. Perhaps the Crime and Misconduct Commission, which is examining the decision at the request of the Premier, will unearth the evidence that compelled the Government to go against the advice of independent planning experts and the express wishes of the local council. But if Ms Bligh wants to preserve the integrity of her Government's planning decisions, she needs to ensure the public is much more informed than it is now about the factors that influenced those decisions.

Bowlers, take note

DID someone get that seagull's name? The cheeky bird that swooped on to the field and flew off with a stump bail during Australia's victorious weekend match against the British Lions at Canterbury could perhaps be the home side's secret weapon. With a crowd-pleasing display of derring-do, it did what beleaguered English bowlers have barely been able to do: knock off a bail or two, quite literally. The umpires had to call for a replacement. No need to rush Andrew Flintoff back into the side after all perhaps?

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Island economy relies on mining

HAVE the families of those who are making comments about closing down mining operations on North Stradbroke Island benefited directly or indirectly from mining over the past 40 years by way of apprenticeships, traineeships or employment?

What would happen to the economy of the island? What would happen to the infrastructure on the island should sand mining cease, and to small businesses that may rely on the mining company's workforce to keep them viable? Barge and water taxi companies might cut services because the patronage would not be there and what employment would be there for those who live on the island and work for the mining company?

Stradbroke cannot exist on tourism alone. The cost to get there for a holiday is quite prohibitive for the average wage-earner by the time they pay for a barge, beach permits - if they are fortunate enough to have a 4WD - and accommodation.

If these people are so passionate about closing down mining, maybe they should think about what sand mining provides for them - glass, paint, ceramics, computer screens, pacemakers, sunscreen, frames for push bikes.

Louise Norris, Cleveland

I WAS heartened to see that plans for the Inskip Point development project have been rejected by the State Government because of environmental concerns.

Many of us who live on North Stradbroke Island are very concerned about the continuing ecological damage being done on this island by sand mining.

As I understand it, some of the mining leases have expired and are not yet renewed. What a golden opportunity for the Government to implement the ALP's long-held proposal to convert extensive areas to national parks.

Mining inflicts a very high ecological price on the state, as well as the local community, all in the name of short-term profit. The long-term health of this community and its economy must rest on sustainable enterprise. Tourism is clearly a key opportunity for using the beauty of this island (especially once the deep scars of

the mining are healed) and provides a means of gainful employment and pride for many inhabitants.

I defy anyone who has the long-term interest of this island at heart to justify the destruction of the continuing sand mining.

Elinor Drake, Point Lookout, North Stradbroke Island

IN THE interests of balanced reporting and, therefore, a better informed public perhaps you might now like to do some research into the efforts mining companies put into rebuilding sand dunes and revegetation and the remarkable results they achieve.

Bill Giles, Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island

Let honest polle be heard

ONCE more, journalist Mike O'Connor has drawn attention to the lack of integrity in people holding responsible positions ("Honesty baffles MPs", Viewpoint, Aug 17).

Quite rightly, he deplores the fact that not one politician, whether in government or in opposition, has the intestinal fortitude to force a change.

Let's face it, use of funds for purposes other than intended is dishonest and no amount of "gilding the lily" by some politicians making public statements on this matter will justify the dishonesty.

We have ample evidence of such occurrences in private industry but surely the people elected to govern our country must be above such actions. Is there not one member of Parliament willing to speak out to ensure honest accountability for money provided by the taxpayer?

I am sure there are some politicians who do not support the current situation regarding the spending of allowances but they need to be heard. Is this wishful thinking on my part?

Frank Long, Ashgrove

Men in real life

AFTER reading Ruth Limkin's column "In real life, there are more than a few good men" (Viewpoint, Aug 17), I felt refreshed and reinvigorated to know that my life's journey is perhaps not much different from many of my male journeymen.

With all the complexities of contemporary living and the confusion pertaining to the role of men in today's society, it is reassuring to hear that men who live a simple life can also live a life that is productive, meaningful and purposeful.

John Quinn, Manly

Charge woman with assault

THE young woman who thought it would be a great idea to throw a beer over Western Bulldogs star Brad Johnson should be tracked down and charged with assault, and the Gabba Trust should ban her for life.

Peter Grills, Westbrook



PAY RISE: Julia Gillard wants states to reward top teachers.

Aim for greatest good

FEDERAL Education Minister Julia Gillard is reported as supporting proposals to award pay increases to high-performing teachers (C-M, Aug 17).

Such proposals are no doubt well-intentioned but like much of politics they are more about appearance than substance and will probably do little to improve the overall quality of learning in classrooms across the country. This is because most teachers are not high-performing; they are average, just as are the members of every other occupational group.

By all means have incentives for high-performing teachers, provided appropriate selection procedures can be worked out.

However, if an adequate proportion of the best and brightest are to be attracted to, and retained in, the teaching profession, salaries need to be significantly increased across the board, not just for a select minority.

Garry Collins, Stafford Heights

Drivers better prepared

THE logbook learning system worked well for my niece who got her provisional driver's licence recently. My daughter is up to about 40 hours of driving and doing very well. Time on the road with an adult counts for so much. Sure there is cheating (impossible to eliminate) but those who adhere to the policy are earning a licence and are better prepared than those who, only two years ago, needed no records at all.

Chris Rose, Wights Mountain

THE provision of 100 hours of supervised practice is beyond the

resources of most families with the cost of fuel so high and daily living stretched to the limit, and parents may be totally unsuited to the role of providing supervision. In the interests of community safety, with due regard to the road toll, instruction in driving skills should be undertaken at a TAFE-type institution charging a modest fee payable by the student in small increments in their licence fee.

Parents, families, relatives and friends should be removed from the equation entirely. We are only perpetuating bad habits.

Colin Williams, Fig Tree Pocket

IN BRIEF

● FEDERAL Education Minister Julia Gillard claims there is no one more important than the teacher in front of the class. Parents are the first educators and if, for whatever reason, they have failed in this task there is not a lot the teacher can do. The earliest years of training and the consequent upbringing of the children are the most important foundations upon which teachers can or cannot build.

Jim Timmermans, Auchenflower

● RECENT articles in *The Courier-Mail* have highlighted on-going bickering between Brisbane City Council and the State Government over traffic delays of up to 50 minutes during the Hale Street Bridge construction. Why not make Coronation Drive and Milton Rd, both of which have linking streets, one-way in alternate directions during this period, and possibly leave them that way? Stop arguing and get on with it.

C. Banks, Nundah

● I ENJOYED the Ekka. I went six times (I am a RNA member) and, frankly, I didn't see it all. I took my grandchildren and friends, and they loved it as well. Congratulations RNA. I will look forward to returning next year.

Rhonda Bentley, Aspley

● ONLINE shopping and delivery of groceries is a great way to budget because there is no opportunity to get side-tracked into impulse buying. I buy fortnightly and the \$9 delivery fee is well worth it. This service suits my budgeting and weight loss program. I buy only what is required.

Graham Wallace, Kelvin Grove

● THIS is the TV show I would like to see: Inspector George Gentle, assisted by Inspector Morse, following up on a case originally investigated by The Sweeney and then by The Professionals, with the subsequent arrest of the offender. He is brought before Judge John Deed with Kavanagh, QC, for the defence.

Ian Miller, Everton Park

Thought for today

Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you'll ever regret.

— Laurence J. Peter (1919 - 1988)
Canadian-born US educator