

Greens call for federal intervention to ban mining on Stradbroke Island

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The Australian Greens have called on the Federal Government to step in and ban mining on Stradbroke Island after the State Government's dirty deal to extend mining until 2027 on already expired leases at the island's largest mine.

Australian Greens lead Senate candidate for Queensland, environmental lawyer Larissa Waters said: "The Federal Government should act to protect the old growth forest, ancient sand dunes and koalas of the second largest sand island in the world, because the State Government has failed to do so."

"It's no coincidence that Premier Bligh's 2027 end date for mining is exactly the year the miners told the ASX that Enterprise mine would run out of minerals. She has given the miners exactly what they want, and will even change state laws to enable renewal of Joh-era mining leases that expired nearly three years ago," said Ms Waters, who flew over the Enterprise mine site today.

"To renew expired mining leases on land earmarked to become national park, to a company being sued for breaching other mining lease conditions, is outrageous. Bligh's environmental credibility is shot. Her government is beholden to the mining industry and hooked on its royalties. The Federal Government must urgently step in and protect this great Queensland natural and tourism icon.

"The Greens will move in the new Parliament for amendments to federal Customs Regulations to re-instate the requirement for an export licence to export rutile, ilmenite and zircon. This would allow the Federal Resources Minister to block the export of those minerals from Stradbroke Island, just as the Fraser Government did to stop sand mining on Fraser Island in 1976.

"The Howard government got rid of the Federal Government's power to require an export licence for those three minerals in 1997. The Greens want to restore that power to the Federal Government so it can protect Straddie from the ravages of mineral sand mining.

"I call on the six Senators seeking re-election in Queensland to tell Queenslanders before polling day whether they support a ban on mining on Straddie.

"Stradbroke Island is unique in having a naturally occurring, genetically distinct population of koalas. Land clearing for the mines is destroying the koalas' old growth forest habitat. The ancient layered sand dunes are permanently destroyed by the mining process, with implications for the island's aquifers from Enterprise's 100 metre deep dredge pond.

"Mine rehabilitation can never replace the complexity of the original ancient landscape, which is why the traditional owners are opposing continued mining. Ecologists are saying that the remaining pristine areas are essential to nurture recovery of the mine sites.

"Fifty years of mining is taking its toll on the fragile sand island. Sand mining should urgently be stopped and the workers re-deployed to decommission and revegetate the island's three mine sites, which is estimated to take at least 5 years.

"As the first Greens Senator for Queensland I will move amendments so the Federal Government can ban mining on Stradbroke Island and safeguard the island for future generations to enjoy."

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