



# The Friends of Stradbroke Island Association Inc.

Newsletter No. 58 September 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, 2010: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00**

The postal address of FOSI is PO Box 167, Point Lookout Qld 4183. Website: [www.savestraddie.com](http://www.savestraddie.com)

## Island life . . .



**Flying north . . . welcome swallows take a break on a rocky headland (above).**



**Early morning . . . an Eastern Reef Egret waits for breakfast on Frenchman's Beach (above).**

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## HOW CAN WE SAVE STRADDIE?:

### Why the current proposal is fatally flawed

The areas of North Stradbroke Island being mined now and those under threat of mining are all within the boundaries of the proposed new national park to be declared on the island.

On 20 June this year Premier Anna Bligh announced, with spin and fanfare, that her Government intended to legislate to end mining and declare 80% of North Stradbroke Island National Park – by 2027.

She did not reveal that mineral sands would run out by 2027 anyway, as the miner admitted to the Australian Securities Exchange only last year, nor that her Government could act now to end mining by 2013, using existing legislation.

On 20 June the Premier also concealed that her Government intends to renew expired mining leases at the giant Enterprise mine. Instead she implied that no expired leases would be renewed, leading to initial praise from some environmental groups.



**No reprieve from mining . . . under the Queensland Government's plan for Straddie, much of the island will not be declared National Park until after it has been mined.**

The key mining lease, 1117, expired on 31 October, 2007. The Bligh Government has allowed mining to continue on it for almost three years beyond its expiry date.

*Cont. p.2*

Enterprise is the deepest and most destructive mine that has existed on the Island – a hundred metres deep and hundreds of metres wide. It operates 24/7, slowly moving north, destroying complex original vegetation and ancient sand dunes in its path. It is the mine that has featured in numerous newspaper photographs and in television news footage.

Unimin has no option or right to an extension of an expired lease. On the contrary, cabinet has no power to renew unless the Mines Minister, Stephen Robertson, is satisfied of each of 10 factors listed in the Mineral Resources Act. If he is not satisfied of even one, there is no legal power to renew.



**What about the grandkids? ... Unimin's Yarraman Mine (pictured) will be rehabilitated, but our grandchildren will never get to experience the wonder of the natural eco-systems that were there before.**

There are several of these which should fail the satisfaction test. But one stands out. Before there is legal power to renew, he has to be satisfied that mining of land earmarked for National Park would be an appropriate land use. How could any responsible minister genuinely be satisfied of that?

Belgian miner Unimin continues to destroy old growth forests and ancient sand dunes on a daily basis through a legal loophole. The Act allows mining to continue until a decision is made. But parliament clearly never intended a massive three year delay. It makes a mockery of the law and of parliament. This is why the Save Straddie alliance of six leading environmental groups

recently called on Mr Robertson to apply the law and reject the renewal application without further delay.

## Nature-based tourism is vital for the future of the economy

The Island is known for its wonderful and diverse array of flora and fauna. It has a number of unique and endangered species. There are magnificent freshwater lakes and its wetlands are internationally listed. The Island's koala is genetically distinct from the mainland koala, having been separated for up to 8,000 years, and it is the only naturally occurring Island population. At least 244 bird species inhabit the Island, including rare migrating sea birds.

Stradbroke with its winter whale watching and summer beach life is already an easily accessible player in Queensland's tourism market. But the public has been locked out of much of the Island due to mining. The Bligh Government recognises that eco-tourism is the future in these areas – yet mining continues to destroy this very future and the jobs that go with it. Nature tourists are attracted to intact landscapes. The threatened sand dune systems, which consist of complex layers which mining destroys, are up to 300,000 years old. The complex and varied vegetation, which took thousands of years to develop and which is destroyed to allow mining is unlikely to be replicated. The sand miner's 'rehabilitation' is a poor substitute for the complex ecosystems destroyed by mining. No one with a critical eye genuinely disputes this.

If it is not prepared to end it sooner, the Government can phase out mining by 2013 under existing legislation by:

- refusing to renew the expired leases at Enterprise; and
- cancelling the Vance silica sand mine lease for serious breaches, involving the decade long unlawful removal of non-mineral sand and its sale to the construction and landscape industries.

The Vance silica mine employs less than 20 people.

Last year, CRL, then a public company bound by Australian laws requiring reporting to shareholders, told the Australian Securities Exchange that the only other mine, Yarraman, will run out of minerals in 2013 and that it will shed half of its Island employees anyway, leaving about 100 jobs on the assumption that Enterprise continued. Recent denials of these job losses by Unimin, a private Belgian company with no obligations to Australian shareholders, should be treated with utmost scepticism. The Court of Appeal recently held that Unimin's decade long removal and sale of Island sand was unlawful. The company is now facing criminal charges. It also misled the Supreme Court last year when attempting to justify its unlawful activities at Vance.

When mining finishes, there is a huge amount of work filling in the 100m deep hole at Enterprise and in re-vegetating all three mines – five years work for the employees. This is a reasonable transition period, particularly in a transitory industry. Most miners realise that mining jobs involve moving on from time to time. Fifty years of mining on Stradbroke is already too long. Unsurprisingly, according to respected scientific opinion, any more will threaten the ability of the damaged areas to

recover to a reasonable state.

Rehabilitation is a fundamental condition of mining leases. The Government is holding bonds of over \$40 million to help ensure this.

There will also be many business and job opportunities in Island tourism and related services industries on the Island. For career miners, Unimin itself has nine other mines in Queensland and 40 around Australia and there are many alternatives in a growing industry.

### Conclusion

Despite the serious flaws in its plans to end mining, the Bligh Government should be congratulated for its recognition of native title rights on Stradbroke Island and its planned joint management of National Park with the traditional owners, the Quandamooka people.

We hope that the Government will soon recognise that it would be grossly irresponsible to extend expired mining leases to allow land to be trashed by mining before it is declared National Park and that it will move quickly to phase out mining on fragile NSI. The additional benefit will be the protection of future, long-term employment opportunities in nature tourism and related service industries.

**For more information visit  
[savestraddie.com](http://savestraddie.com)**

### Still campaigning!....1997 revisited

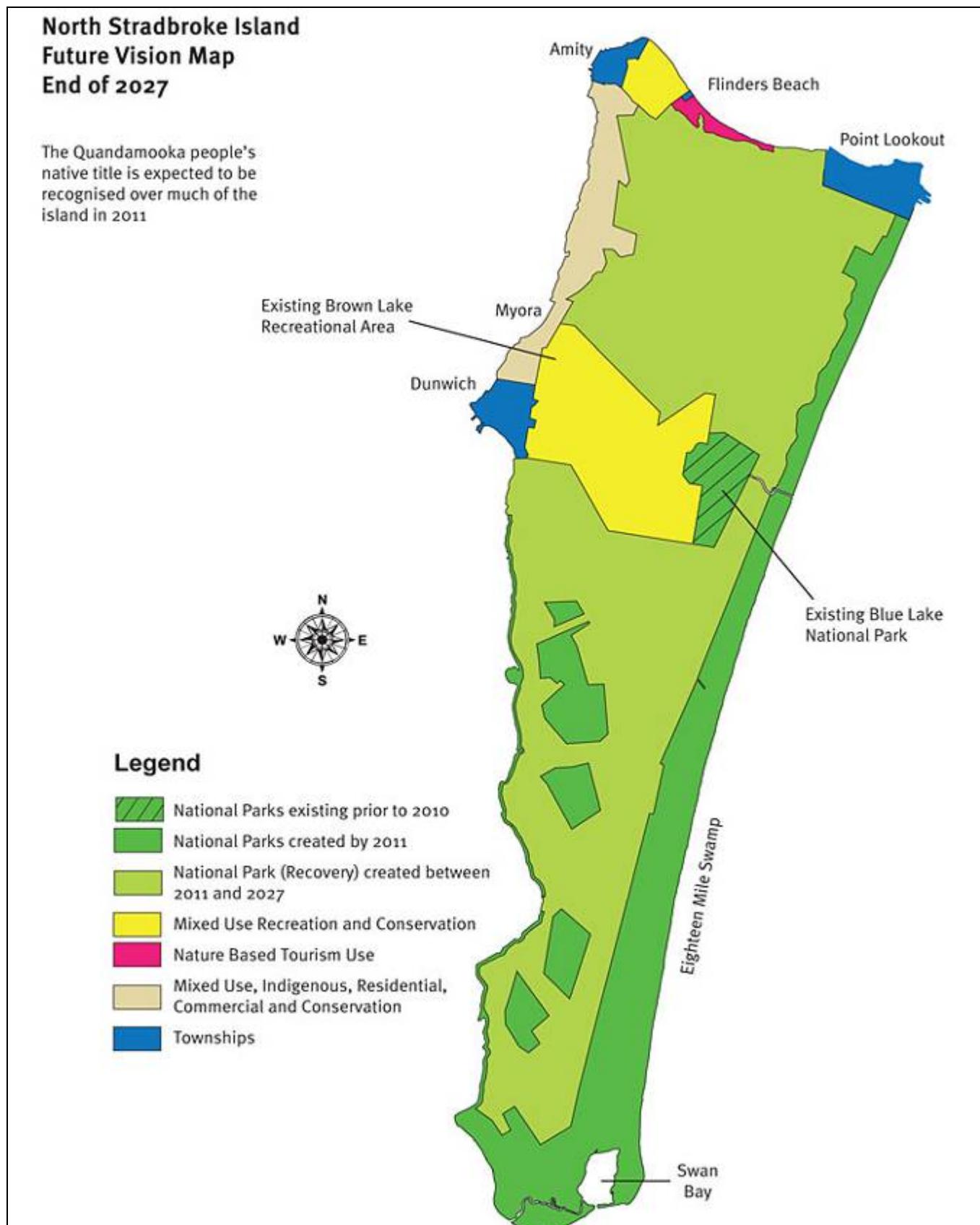


**Blast from the past! . . .** This photo (*left*) is from the 1997 anti-sand mining campaign on Straddie. Now, 13 years on, people who care about the island and the quality of life of future generations of south-east Queenslanders are again fighting to protect this precious island.

So let's keep up the good work! **Tell everyone you know – *It's time to save Straddie!*** The mining leases should not be renewed and National Park should be declared NOW! Not in 17 years time!

## National Park for Straddie – 17 years is too long to wait

This map shows the Queensland Government's plan for North Stradbroke Island. You can make a submission on the Vision For Stradbroke Island by mailing: North Stradbroke Island Team, PO Box 2454 Brisbane QLD 4001, Email: [Straddie.Vision@derm.qld.gov.au](mailto:Straddie.Vision@derm.qld.gov.au) until 30 September. For some ideas for your submission visit [www.savestraddie.com](http://www.savestraddie.com).



## In Brief

**Straddie top of list for new Greens Senator**



*On the campaign trail...*  
Greens Senate candidate arrives on Straddie during the election campaign after inspecting damage done by mining from the air.

**Successful Greens Queensland Senate candidate Larissa Waters has made Saving Straddie one of her top three priorities after her success in the recent Federal election.**

During the campaign FOSI organised for Larissa to inspect the damage being done by Unimin's sand mines from the air. Visit [www.savestraddie.com](http://www.savestraddie.com) to read the Greens' statement.



*Spreading the word*  
...Successful Greens Senate candidate Larissa Wates speaks to the media about Saving Straddie.

## Busy season for whale researchers



*There goes another one!... UQ whale researchers count migrating humpback whales from a platform above Frechman's Beach.*

Whale watching on Straddie is eagerly awaited each year by residents and visitors alike. From April to November the majestic humpback whales pass close to the island on their annual migration from Antarctica to their calving grounds in the warmer northern waters close to the Barrier Reef, and back again.

The whaling industry almost wiped out the humpback whale by 1960. An annual survey of their numbers began 1980. In more recent times Dr Michael Noad from the UQ Vet School at Gatton has been observing, counting and collecting data as part of The East Coast Australian Humpback Whale Survey.

The humpback whale (*megaptera novaeangliae*) is the fifth largest of the great whales. Adult females can grow 15 to 17 metres long and weigh 30 to 40 tonnes.

According to Dr Noad, there has been a very strong and consistent recovery of numbers of between 10-11% per year. He said the survey showed that this increase might be slowing down this year, which was a good sign and may be halfway to the number when it will finally taper off. Researchers reported many interesting sightings this year including a large pod of killer whales that were seen chasing the humpbacks southward.

Between April and September the total migratory population of whales passing Point Lookout is approx 15,000, and the daily number between 70 and 100.

Before leaving Antarctica the whales feed all summer, eating  $\frac{1}{2}$  tonne of krill per day. This puts on a huge layer of blubber, sometimes a metre thick, which sustains them on their eight month journey. As they pass by we see spectacular breaches and fin slapping.

*Cont. p.6*

## Court of Appeal win on construction sand

A July decision by the Court of Appeal has scuttled North Stradbroke Island miner Unimin's attempts to resuscitate its bid to quarry millions of tonnes of low-value construction sand from the island.

The Court upheld Redland City Council's 2008 unanimous decision to refuse a Unimin subsidiary the permits needed to remove sand from the island and truck it to the barge load-out at Dunwich for sale to the construction industry.

At the time, Unimin's proposal caused outrage because of the disruption to the Dunwich community and environmental devastation that would be caused by the quarrying.

Many were concerned about the noise, pollution and safety issues associated with trucking.

They were also alarmed by the prospect of huge tracts of the island being dug up and exported to the mainland from long-life operations.

The Court of Appeal held that the miner's application to the Council was

defective in a number of respects and it dismissed the miner's appeal against the Council's unanimous decision.

FOSI and the other successful co-respondents have since called upon the Queensland Government to promise that it will not consent to a fresh application for Council approval - Government consent is a necessary pre-condition. No response has yet been received, although the Premier has been reminded of her March 2009 pre-election letter to voters which stated that her Government supported the Council's decision to reject the proposal. In view of that, it would be surprising if the Government were to allow one of its officers to provide the required consent. A further indication that the Government will not consent to a fresh application to the Council is that QCM (the Unimin subsidiary) has recently filed an application for special leave to appeal to the High Court against the Court of Appeal's dismissal of its appeal.

*Busy times for whale researchers cont. from p.5*



**Big breach!... a whale breaching off the east coast.**

Males and females breach for a number of reasons but when it comes to mating rituals, breaches can occur to impress one another or to intimidate competition.

Gestation takes 11 months and calves are born 3-5m long and weigh two tonnes. The mother feeds the baby for almost a year and produces 240 litres of

milk per day. Whale milk is the constituency of chewing gum and between 40-60% milk fat so the baby develops well, by which time it will have doubled its length. In the meantime the mother will have lost 4,000kg by winter's end.

Sound is of tremendous importance to humpback communications, and they are thought to produce 640 different vocalisations; males sing complex songs comprised of verses and sets, lasting 20 minutes and repeated continuously for hours at a time. Songs are unique to different regions in the world.

The survey site for the UQ count was a platform overlooking Frenchman's Beach. This was generously erected by the Redland City Council under the direction of Dan Carter. Dr Noad and his team are extremely grateful for this assistance in their research

**By Angela McLeod**

## Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival Success

There can be no doubting the dedication and enthusiasm of the musicians from the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO). Rachel Smith, Principal first violin with the QSO, has directed the Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival since its inauguration in 2007. This year, together with 12 or so of her fellow players plus other musicians, she again gave up her QSO 'break' to spend a week working hard on North Stradbroke Island (to say nothing of the many hours of organisation!).



*Sparkling...* The 2010 festival was a treat!

While most visitors to Straddie are there for a holiday, these musicians rehearsed, presented four demanding concerts and held classes for local musicians. There certainly wasn't much time for sightseeing!

I have to confess to being a committed SCMF 'groupie'. I look forward to travelling 'overseas' for a week or so of R&R and taking in the sea air, the relaxed lifestyle and hospitality of the island and soaking up the beautiful music. The variety was amazing. We had gems such as the sparkling Mendelssohn string quartet Op.44, the impassioned Mozart String Quintet K.174, the uplifting Brahms Clarinet Quintet Op.115 and Schubert's heavenly, but at times troubled, String Quintet D956. The perky wind quintet 'Summer Music' by Samuel Barber provided the pallet-cleansing sorbet between courses in the first concert on the

Friday night. Then followed the dark and brooding String Sextet, '*Transfigured Night*', by Schoenberg.

Concert 3 was aimed at the youngsters who came in great numbers (and in great voice!!) to the Dunwich Community Hall. Col Cunningham narrated the story of *Peter and the Wolf*, music by Prokofiev, which was well received. Cellist Louise King successfully 'stopped the show' for a while with a clearly audible 'wow' after the timpani 'rifle shots'. Australian composers Stanhope, Sculthorpe and Hopkins provided the remainder of the program with several beautiful cello solos by Louise (wow) King and a string quartet with didgeridoo.

Concert 4 on Sunday morning featured the highly-regarded Freshwater (Piano) Trio from Melbourne. The program was delightful with piano trios by Beethoven and Brahms and a little 'sorbet' in between by Australian composer Gordon Kerry. The tangy dessert items were amazing arrangements of piano solos by Chopin and Schumann for the trio by Jazz musician and composer Joe Chindamo.



The final concert was a special dedication to the memory of Stradbroke identity and Festival inspiration Jani Haenke. The Schubert String Quintet brought the Festival to a most satisfying conclusion.

I can't wait to see what Festival No. 4 brings. But I know I'll be there!!

*By Peter Crane*

## Flotsam

**Then and now: what CRL said about jobs before SaveStraddie**

*Here's something to think about when considering the mining companies' claimed commitment to Straddie and economic contribution to the island. In a letter to the ASX in May '09 (prior to the Unimin takeover), CRL stated: "the company will move from the current two mine operation on NSI to a single mine operation when mining at Yarraman is completed in late 2013... No immediate job losses result from the strategy but with only one mine operating on NSI, employee numbers are expected to approximately halve by 2014."*

**Members: new e-mail or home address?**

*Members, if you have a new postal or e-mail address please let FOSI know so we can get news to you.*

*You can post us the details or e-mail:  
[emcphee@westnet.com.au](mailto:emcphee@westnet.com.au).*



*Camouflage... a mopoke owl at Point Lookout.*

## Qld Premier Anna Bligh's views on North Stradbroke Island in the Brisbane Times

It was great to read of Premier Anna Bligh's concern for North Stradbroke Island in her recent [www.brisbanetimes.com.au](http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au) contribution (see "Saving my island 'oasis' from sand mining").

However, despite the heartfelt claim she makes, the Bligh Government has created confusion by stating in various ways that the island's mineral sand resources could support a thriving island economy for 100 or 200 more years, when this is simply not the case (her Brisbane Times article mentions 100 years, while her 20 June media release said 200 years).

This backs the miners' emotional, and false, claims that the island will be an economic black hole without them.

**The facts:** The truth is that commercial deposits of mineral sands (zircon, rutile and ilmenite), which have been mined for fifty years, will run out by 2027 at the latest.

In May 2009, CRL told the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) that its workforce on the Island would halve once Yarraman closed in 2013. (See extract from letter at left).

If expired leases are renewed to allow Enterprise to be mined out and if the Yarraman dredge were to be moved to Enterprise, the minerals will run out by 2023. No doubt, if permitted, Unimin could speed up the whole process and end it sooner.

**What then?**: Local businesses and residents alike need to face up to the facts: mining is coming to an end anyway.

The only other resource legally presently able to be mined is silica sand. The Vance Silica Mine however employs only about 15 people. No-one could legitimately argue that this mine is capable of propping up the economy of the Island.

**The future of the Island:** One thing is clear. Mining is not the future for the Island. What are the alternatives? There are a number of alternatives but nature tourism and related service industries are certainly the most obvious.

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**Check out what's new: [www.savestraddie.com](http://www.savestraddie.com)**