



The Friends of Stradbroke Island Association Inc.

Newsletter No. 59 February 2011

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, 2011: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00

FOSI postal address: PO Box 167, Point Lookout Qld 4183

Birdbath Gatherings



Female Leaden Flycatcher



Little Wattlebirds and Noisy Friarbirds

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ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

An analysis of the words and actions of successive Governments over the past 20 years unfortunately reveals hypocrisy, political spin and deception. Instead of 'protecting and preserving the Island for future generations', there has been an expansion of mining and the destruction which it causes.

Words

In 1990, the then Labor Government led parliament and the public to believe that half of North Stradbroke Island was to become National Park.¹

Actions

None. Had it happened then, it is likely that mining would have ended years ago. No National Park has been declared since the 1960's declaration of a small area around Blue Lake. For the past two decades the Government has bent over backwards for the mining companies. It has extended expired leases and permitted the expansion of the destruction.

Proof that the mines have become larger and more destructive can be seen by exploring **google earth** and **nearmap.com**.

NEWSFLASH

Stradbroke miner, UNIMIN has recently taken the name of its parent company, the Belgian silica miner, SIBELCO.

Words

The Premier said in a pre-election letter in March, 2009 sent to voters that NSI needs to be "*protected and preserved for future generations*". In a recent article in the Brisbane Times she said....

¹ Hansard 8/5/90 p. 1151

"The truth is that sand mining should never have been allowed to begin on North Stradbroke Island. It was a mistake. The leases were issued during an era when it was easier to get a mining lease than it was to get a driving licence. It was the "rip it up and ship it out" era that saw the diggers begin to dig at our island's heart".²

Actions

You would be forgiven for thinking that, in the light of these words, there would be no way expired leases would be extended. Yet they were extended by the Beattie cabinet³, when Anna Bligh and most of her current colleagues were members and she was the Deputy Premier. At least seven leases have been extended (or newly granted) since 2000.

Words

Electors were taken for fools in June 2010 when the Premier announced that her Government was ending mining. As is now becoming widely known, the miner told the Australian Securities Exchange in May, 2009⁴ that the Island would run out of mineral sands by 2027 – the year the Bligh Government says it will end mining!

To reinforce the spin, the Bligh Government spent \$240,000 distributing a propaganda letter containing the Government's smoke and mirrors 'vision' for Stradbroke to more than one million households in South-east Queensland.⁵

Actions

There are several key expired leases which are essential to mining continuing. Instead of applying the Mineral Resources Act to

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<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/saving-my-island-oasis-from-sand-mining-20100817-127w2.html>

³ While it is the Minister who has to be satisfied of various factors before there is any power to renew, it is the cabinet which makes the final decision. Cabinet has a discretion to refuse to renew even if the Minister recommends renewal.

⁴ The letter can be viewed at [savestraddie.com](http://www.savestraddie.com)

⁵

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/government-ramps-up-bid-to-quell-island-fears-20101112-17pp0.html>

end mining by 2013⁶, the intended action announced by Premier Bligh on 20 June, 2010 is to legislate to end mining by 2027! Its hardly surprising that the miner's multi-million dollar advertising campaign is supporting this plan.

Words

In an article in the Courier-Mail following Gordon Nuttall's recent convictions for corruption (again) and perjury, Anna Bligh stated that Nuttall's convictions demonstrated that "business must be done by the strict letter of the law" and "that no one is above the law".⁷



Actions

Instead of prosecuting Unimin for the unlawful removal and sale of substantial quantities of non-mineral sand over a decade, the Government concealed and ignored a report given to it in February, 2009 containing evidence from EPA officers that Unimin knew it was not entitled to take the sand, falsely denied it when challenged and continued to sell it after it was told by the EPA to stop – that is, acted dishonestly. Before charging Unimin with the simple offences now before the

⁶ Section 286A MRA sets out the law on applications for expired leases. However, Minister Robertson refuses to apply it even to the most significant expired lease ML 1117 – which expired more than 3 years ago. In our view he now knows that renewal of this lease cannot be justified, so the Government just allows Unimin to continue to mine on expired leases. It has said it intends to legislate in 2011 – to extend mining.

⁷ Courier-Mail, October 29

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/gordon-nuttall-guilty-verdict-shows-none-is-above-the-law-says-anna-bligh/story-e6freoof-1225944876739>

Magistrates Court, the Government allowed Unimin to make an (unsuccessful) civil application to the Supreme Court intended to avoid any prosecution and acquiesced in the misleading of the Court by Unimin. The miner claimed to be innocent of any intentional wrongdoing, contrary to the Government's, then concealed, independent investigation report.

When the report was leaked (late last year), our lawyers obtained an opinion from two eminent criminal barristers, one a senior counsel and former prosecutor. In their view, there is a prima facie case of stealing and misappropriation/fraud against Unimin. The joint opinion was immediately sent to the Premier and the Attorney-General. Still there is no action to prosecute these offences - offences which properly reflect the serious nature of the allegations. Currently, Unimin stands charged only with simple offences alleging lack of correct permits, but no allegation of dishonesty.

Words

In the pre-election letter to voters from the Premier dated 16 March 2009, it was said :-

"The Bligh Government supports Redland Shire Council's decision to refuse Development Approval to remove and sell sand from Stradbroke Island."

This was a reference to the August 2008 unanimous decision of the Council rejecting an application by a CRL subsidiary (before Unimin bought them out) to remove large quantities of sand from the Enterprise mine and sell it to the construction industry.

Actions

The Bligh Government granted the miner a permit under the Forestry Act in 2007. The Council application could not have been made without the permit. Since the Premier's letter, numerous requests to the Premier asking for the permit to be withdrawn have fallen on deaf ears. Instead environment and community groups and individuals have had to fight the miners in Court. The Court of Appeal dismissed the miner's appeal against the Council decision

in July, 2010⁸ but the miner has applied for special leave to appeal to the High Court. The Bligh Government could have ended all of this at any time by simply withdrawing the Forestry Act permit.

Conclusion

If the Government wanted to back the miners why didn't it just come out and say so? Why cloak its support for continued destruction of the Island with promises about 'protecting and preserving the Island'? Why pretend to be saving the Island but then announce that it is likely that the expired leases on Enterprise, the most destructive mine, will be extended, meaning that large tracts of bushland and ancient dunes could be destroyed, before being declared National Park ?

You might think that this is the sort of behaviour engaged in by most Governments, but the behaviour towards Stradbroke Island has been particularly hypocritical. Its attempts to look 'green' and facilitate further destruction at the same time make it look pathetic. Opposition to mining is growing. Lets hope it results in the Government deciding to back its own words with appropriate action. If so, it is sure to receive all round praise by most South-East Queenslanders.



Wind erosion from Enterprise mine. Sent to FOSI by a passing pilot.

FOR MORE INFO GO TO THE UPDATED
SAVESTRADDIE.COM

⁸ <http://www.sclqld.org.au/qjudgment/2010/QCA/182>

Shearwater Wreck

Recently many of us were distressed by the sight of large numbers of dead and dying birds on Main Beach. They were short tailed shearwaters often known as mutton birds. Local naturalist Michael Hines and Dave Stewart from Queensland Parks and Wildlife had been observing this event and noted carcasses every 5m for at least 5km, so there were considerable numbers of dead and dying birds.



A sad sight for a Brahminy Kite.

Short tailed shearwaters are pelagic, that is, they live their life in the open ocean and are a migratory species. There are approximately 23 million in the world, breeding on the Australian islands during the warmer months mainly in Tasmania and Islands in the Bass Strait. It is the most abundant Australian seabird. There are about 285 colonies in SE Australia, 18 million birds arriving in Tasmania each year. They have adapted to life on the ocean by having webbed feet for swimming, a hooked beak for fishing, and long and narrow wings for efficient high speed gliding. Shearwaters have a wing span of 1 metre and weigh 500 g. They are one of the few birds with a well developed sense of smell. They were first recorded by members of Captain Cook's third expedition on the Discovery sailing through the Arctic and were named as such for their graceful shearing flight.

The birds start breeding at 5 years of age and in early Sept/Oct meet with their chosen mate and begin to prepare and tidy

up the old burrows or excavate new ones. They mate inside the metre long burrows, and retain that partner for life. They leave the colony in November to feed before laying a single white egg, allowing the bird to build up fat for its long journey. The distinct peak egg laying date is 27-28 Nov. Both birds incubate the egg, and the chick hatches after 53 days. Both parents feed the baby and quickly it becomes twice the size of a parent. In April the adults depart leaving the downy chick behind. From this time to early May the chick does not eat, rapidly loses weight and acquires its flight feathers. It moves closer to the shore and exercises its wings. 2-3 weeks after the parents leave the young birds start their amazing migratory flight unassisted by the experienced birds. The average life span is 15-19 years but some live to 38 years.

Between June and August the birds fly north along the western Pacific to the Arctic and Bering Sea to feed. They return south between October and January along the east coast of Australia, travelling 15,000 km in each direction and incredibly some do the whole journey in 6 weeks. In some years many perish and are washed up onto the beach. This is thought to result from exhaustion, starvation the influence of storms and strong winds. By the time the birds arrive back in Australia they have expended most of their energy reserves on the journey losing half their body weight. They may meet with unusual sea surface temperatures which can affect their main food source which is krill, squid and fish. They can dive 10 metres to fish, but when their food supply is unavailable they become exhausted. Southerly gales make it impossible for the birds to fly on in this weakened state and so they are blown and washed ashore. Sometimes live birds are washed up but are too exhausted to head back out to sea. The elderly and young birds are the most vulnerable. They are able to cope with strong gales at sea when they are fit and well. So it is thought that this was the fate of the many birds found on our island.

The sighting of so many dead and dying birds was distressing and many people voiced their concern causing the Minister for the Environment to instigate a rescue operation. The Environment Department needed to respond cautiously in their approach to the rescue and made an order that no one should go near the birds until it had been confirmed that they were not carriers of Bird flu. There was a delay therefore of 2-3 days before 80 birds were collected, half from Main Beach and the other half from south Straddie. Wildlife carers from Straddie and DERM officers collected and took the birds to the Pelican and Seabird rescue station at Manly. The Government scientist's testing for bird flu proved negative. It is highly unlikely that pelagic birds carry the virus. These birds are notoriously difficult to rehabilitate according to researchers at the UQ Research Station. However, of the 40 birds collected from NSI and 40 from SSI which

were rescued, 18 were nursed back to health and released, regrouping to fly south. 200,000 or more shearwater chicks are harvested commercially under licence in Tasmania each year, being prized for their down, feathers, oil and flesh.

If you find shearwaters or other birds on the beach the Pelican and Seabird Rescue asks that you contact them on 0404118301. UQ Research Station is of the opinion it is best to leave shearwaters alone as they are notoriously difficult to rehabilitate. First check if they have a numbered metal band around a leg. If so, contact Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme as well.

A special thanks to Mike Hines for his help with information, Emma Lewis at the UQ Research station, Dunwich and to Robert Ashdown for the photos.

Angela McLeod

Straddie Has a Problem With Mynas

Concerned Stradbroke Islanders are taking action to try to stop the establishment and spread of the pest Common Myna (also known as the Indian Myna or -by some detractors -as "flying cane toads") on the Island. Submissions have been written to the Redland Shire Council calling for integrated action and some trapping is taking place. Three main groups of mynas exist on the Island: a large group at Dunwich, a fairly small group at Amity and a small but steadily growing group at Point Lookout.

The species is listed by the IUCN (World Conservation Union) as one of the 100 of the world's worst invasive alien species alongside Red Foxes and Cane Toads (both of which Straddie unfortunately also has to cope with). It is a serious environmental pest as it aggressively competes for nest hollows and food, adversely affecting the breeding success of native birds and hollow-nesting mammals. Mynas are an adaptable and omnivorous scavenger feeding on chicks, young birds and eggs as well as fruits, nectar and

insects. Mynas are a threat to our native lorikeets, rosellas, kookaburras etc and small mammals, like sugar gliders as they compete for hollows but also are a direct threat to small birds such as Willy Wagtails and brown honeyeaters through predation on their nests. To make matters worse, it is also a major disperser of seeds from the pest plant lantana and is suspected of spreading other environmental weeds.



The Common Myna takes food from rubbish bins and is often seen sorting

through leaf litter in parks and gardens, at picnic areas and on road verges in search of food*. Mynas gather at dusk forming noisy, squabbling groups at communal roosts in dense foliage such as palms and pines. They remain in the same area throughout the year, but can travel up to 12 km between roost and feeding areas. They are often seen in pairs or small parties and spend a lot of time feeding on the ground. It is important to differentiate the pest Common Mynah from the Australian native honeyeater, the Noisy Miner, also found on Straddie, which have light grey to grey-brown bodies.

Michael Dickinson, Island Wildlife Spotter / Catcher from Australian Wildlife & Feral Management is interested in supporting local people to take action against the mynas. Michael says 'from my experience with mynas, a groundswell of community interest needs to take place to get a large group of highly motivated people together who can start trapping and rotating traps around differing areas as you cannot successively trap birds in one location [they

get wary]. Plus people can start to lose interest after a while as it takes a lot of patience and sometimes little reward – but if the people are there then the job can be done...'. Michael is available to give advice on the myna's habits and on trapping and humane destruction of the pests. Michael has traps available for loan. In early 2011, after the summer holiday season has passed, Michael is looking to organise a community meeting at Dunwich to present an update on fox control on NSI and discuss the idea of starting a coordinated, community-based Myna control program. FOSI will notify members by email of the date and time of the meeting. If you are interested in taking action to tackle the myna problem, please contact Michael on email: micsall@aapt.net.au or tel: 0413 602 155

*More information about the myna problem can be found online at the Myna National Animal Pest Alert (http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/content/pw/pest_alert_inde.htm)

Mary Barram

Warning – Myrtle Rust

Recently this serious and notifiable fungal disease has been detected in Queensland commercial plant nurseries. The rust poses a threat to some of Stradbroke's dominant plant species, particularly bottlebrush (previously *callistemon spp.*), tea tree (*melaleuca spp.*) and *eucalyptus spp.* The rust is a distinctive egg-yolk yellow colour.



Myrtle rust on *Melaleuca linarifolia* (Angus Carnegie, Department of Industry and Investment, New South Wales

If you see it in your garden or in the wild please call Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**

For more information go to www.dpi.qld.gov.au

PLEASE SEND DONATIONS TO FOSI FOR THE SAVE STRADDIE, END MINING CAMPAIGN.

We can't afford a multimillion dollar advertising campaign but our efforts have gained us good media and much public support. Courier Mail polls show 80% want mining to end now. Help us get the message out.

Email emcphoe@westnet.com.au for the account number or cheque to FOSI PO BOX 167 Point Lookout Qld 4183

Pressures on Moreton Bay

It was disappointing to read in the Baycare News (the newsletter of the Moreton Bay Environmental Alliance, of which FOSI is a member) that a new high speed power boat service around Moreton Bay is commencing. The twelve passenger, rigid inflatable power boat will travel at speeds of up to 106km/hr but will reduce speed in 'areas with endangered marine life'. High speed power boats, through direct strikes and noise pollution of their marine environment, are a potential threat to environmentally significant species such as dugongs and turtles which can occur throughout the Bay and not just in protected areas (for example: to the delight of passengers travelling on the Cleveland/Dunwich barge, whales with calves were sighted 'close-up' several times in the Bay during September).

UNIMIN CHARGES:

In December 2010 the court rejected a UNIMIN challenge to the current charges (taking the sand without permits).

Last month the charges were adjourned to 14 June 2011. This is an unusually lengthy adjournment, apparently sought by both UNIMIN and the Government. UNIMIN intend to make another legal challenge to the charges on 14 June 2011.

FOSI and others continue to press the Government to charge UNIMIN with stealing and misappropriation/fraud.

Koala Survey

Despite rain, wind, rain, storms, and rain for days previously, the NSI Urban Koala Survey 2010 was blessed with a day of sunny skies (and brisk breezes...and a bracing water taxi ride!). Certainly nothing to deter the 50+ volunteers who appeared at Dunwich Cemetery (or Point Lookout) on Saturday, October 16, with hopes of spying some of the local fauna, koalas in particular.



We divided into groups of at least four people and all scrutinised a delegated portion of Dunwich, Amity Point or Point Lookout for the entire morning. Our little group didn't actually spot any koalas in 'our' bit of Dunwich but several curious locals (no doubt wondering what on earth was so interesting in the trees) assured us there had been koalas

around recently & they frequently heard them grunting or fighting at night. We did find koala scratches on trees and some scats & surprised a large goanna and enjoyed wandering – with necks craned and eyes peeled – along Adams Beach and a bush track meandering south from there. We were also fascinated to stumble upon a tiny cemetery seemingly forgotten in the bush, with graves from the lazaret once situated on Adams Beach.

We were impressed on returning to Dunwich cemetery for lunch to have the three koalas, one with a joey, in residence there pointed out. They are NOT easy to spot! Fortunately, our group's results were not indicative of the koala status of the island's urban areas. 28 koalas were counted in total – two more than last year, including five females with joeys. Obviously that is only a fraction of the population here and hopefully an encouraging sign of the health of the island's ecosystems.

Diana McPhee



Fresh as a sea breeze The Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival returns with the whales August 2011



Winter brings whales to island waters and the sparkling Chamber Music Festival to its shores.

The program for 2011 promises fine music and zesty performances delivered by a merry band of virtuosi. Mozart's Gran Partita, Schubert's Trout Quintet, a Debussy string quartet, Misinterprotato jazz trio, an intimate evening with Katie Noonan and friends . . . all this and much more will be presented with the festival's usual warmth and informality at concerts in all three island townships. So mark these dates on your calendar now:

**Friday 5 August to Sunday 7
August**

Visit www.stradmusic.org for details.

MORETON BAY: Flood Causes Environmental Crisis

Although Southern Moreton Bay may have experienced less impact from the flood plume there is still a big question mark over the health of the marine life. There is a blanket ban on fishing in Moreton Bay and oysters are not being harvested. This is obviously affecting livelihoods on North Stradbroke Island.

CSIRO researcher's robotic glider (the yellow submarine) has been deployed to work in conjunction with satellite imaging to view turbidity caused by flood run off in the bay. The glider's sensors will help to obtain a view within the mud and debris. The three dimensional maps developed will help understanding of the dynamics of the flood plume and its likely effects on sea grass, fish, dugong, turtles, coral and other sea life. The researchers hope to assess the bay's resilience after this extreme event.

We just have to keep our fingers crossed that health returns to this unique marine ecosystem. But there will be lessons to be learnt in managing run off in the future.



CSIRO ocean engineers, Rob Gregor (left) and Lindsay MacDonald, with the glider in Hobart before shipment to Brisbane. (Craig Macaulay, CSIRO)