

Sand miners contribute \$70 million a year to North Stradbroke Island

MINING for mineral sands and silica has had a special relationship with the North Stradbroke Island community since operations started in the 1950s.

Since its inception, mining has brought prosperity to the island and helped establish the communities we see today. Whether through directly employed local people or the indirectly subsidised economy, the public interest of North Stradbroke Island depends on the presence of mining companies.

A sustainable future for North Stradbroke must incorporate the significant social, economic and environmental contribution mining makes to life on the island.

For more than 40 years, Unimin Australia Limited, including CRL, has operated mines on North Stradbroke, supporting several critical services pivotal to the development of the island community.

Each year, more than \$70 million is injected into the local economy through mining, and the social and economic structure of the island depends on the support of the mining industry.

Unimin is the largest company in the Redlands, employing more than 270 staff, with more than 145 of those employees being long-term residents of North Stradbroke Island.

Mining families account for one in five of the 2000 permanent residents on the island. About 40 per cent of all children in childcare and at school on the island come from mining families.

Removing the industry that employs their parents would have a detrimental effect on the future viability of education services on the island.

And with one-third of members of Volunteer Marine Rescue and Queensland Fire Services on the island being mining employees, they are truly part of the local community.

Mining is also an important source of employment and training for the island's indigenous population. About 15 per cent of mine workers are from the local indigenous community.

Unimin is also working in partnership with the local indigenous community to provide indigenous trainees with on-the-job experience as part of their Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

The island's burgeoning tourism industry has grown in parallel with mining activity. Regular ferry services, roads and other infrastructure that support tourism on North Stradbroke Island rely on year-round demand created by mining.

Without the continued investment by mining operations, a significant number of services and their employees could not be sustained and would be forced to leave the island.

Furthermore, Stradbroke Ferries, which has been servicing the island for 47 years, would lose significant revenue, putting costs under pressure, which would threaten job security, reduce service frequency and increase ticket prices.

North Stradbroke Island is proof that tourism and mining can co-exist to deliver improved services for residents and visitors.

While some would try to assert otherwise, only 50 per cent of the island is under mining leases and about half of that will never be disturbed.

There is nothing to stop people from establishing an eco-tourism resort or venture on the island.

Mining can occur on North Stradbroke Island without creating a large environmental footprint.

Unimin has a strong track record in environmental management. Unimin employees have successfully rehabilitated many mine sites while working in confined, environmentally sensitive areas.

In fact, Unimin has achieved world firsts and is renowned internationally for the rehabilitation of native vegetation and ecosystems on North Stradbroke's high sand dunes. Every year it restores on average 75ha of land to its original form, with almost 4000ha rehabilitated so far.

Many years of peer-reviewed research supports Unimin's record in rehabilitation. This research has recently confirmed that the island's koalas are living happily in rehabilitated land. Furthermore, Unimin's future mining plans will not affect any established koala habitat.

The mines on North Stradbroke Island are delivering best practice, industry-leading rehabilitation programs, and at the same time providing employment and other opportunities to the local community.

Unimin has always been willing to explore the transition of land not needed for the mine operations and rehabilitated sites to national parks.

If all parties can work together, a strong and sustainable future can be assured for the island.

Campbell Jones is the CEO of Unimin Australia