

Broken promises threaten Straddie's future

The decision by the Queensland Government to shut down all mineral sands mining operations on North Stradbroke Island (NSI) by 2019 breaks a black and white commitment made by the Premier in June 2010.

The Bligh Government committed to allowing mining to continue on the Island until 2027. However, due to pressure from green groups, the government has gone back on their word and now left the future of some 600 workers and over 2,000 Island residents in jeopardy.

The Premier's announcement means that 94 per cent of mining operations will be shut down by 2019. Hundreds of mining jobs will disappear from the Island, leading to local businesses, schools and infrastructure to be crippled.

Sibelco's mining operations supports fuel and electricity supplies, the barge and ferry services to and from the Island, general infrastructure and maintenance and local community and sporting groups. The organisation has delivered great outcomes for the community, the environment and the Island's economy since commencing mining some 50 years ago, and Sibelco Australia believes that this announcement by the State Government to prematurely shut down mining operations will shut down Straddie.

Island resident and Sibelco Sustainability and Community Relations Manager Paul Smith said local residents and employees are devastated by the State Government's about face.

"The residents, visitors, businesses and our Sibelco employees have been left stranded by this broken promise by the Bligh government," Mr Smith said.

"Everyone is feeling betrayed by a State Government which is pandering to minority and green groups who have a long-standing history of opposing progressive and beneficial development on the Island."

Sibelco has been in negotiations with the State Government since June 2010 to determine the best way forward for NSI and its residents. During these negotiations, Sibelco proposed an orderly and staged end to mining on the Island by 2027 – a timeframe which would allow alternative industries to develop and prosper.

"By not listening to the concerns of the people of the Island and forcing us to shut down mining operations on the Island too soon, the Bligh Government is effectively shutting down Straddie," Mr Smith said.

This proposed shut down date from the State Government does not provide the people of NSI with enough time to ensure the future economic viability of the Island. This will throw Straddie into an economic depression."

Sibelco also believe this broken promise by the Bligh government threatens the future of North Stradbroke Island, and poses a threat to the multi-billion dollar mining industry in Queensland – an industry that employs tens of thousands of people and will be instrumental in rebuilding the state's economy after the recent spate of natural disasters.

"In order to push ahead with the proposed 2019 closure, the State Government will curtail the renewal of existing mining leases," Mr Smith said.

"Mining is taking place on NSI within the conditions of these existing leases. From what we understand, there has never been a non-renewal of a lease in this way in the history of Queensland. This broken promise by the State Government will set a dramatic precedent which will undermine the fundamental basis for the security of mining leases across the state.

“With this back flip, Anna Bligh has put every mining company operating in Queensland on notice – you never know who could be next.

“This is a clear example of sovereign risk and other investors in Queensland should take notice of what is happening here.”

Sibelco Australia and the people of NSI have banded together to fight the State Government’s plans for an early shut down to sand mining on the Island, and are urging people to visit www.sustainablestradbroke.com.au and send the Premier a letter supporting a later shut down date and secure Straddie’s future.

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