



Select Committee on Certain Aspects of Queensland Government Administration related to Commonwealth Government Affairs

Submission by Stradbroke Island Management Organisation Inc

1. This submission is on behalf of the Committee of Management of the Stradbroke Island Management Organisation Inc (SIMO). SIMO is a community organisation concerned with the environmental and social well-being of North Stradbroke Island/Minjerribah (NSI), which is one of the barrier sand islands that form the outer rim of Moreton Bay. SIMO has been the largest and most influential community organisation on the Island for more than thirty years.
2. The submission is addressed to the Committee's term of reference (e), viz.
whether it is appropriate for the Federal Minister for the Environment to delegate his approval powers to the Queensland State Government under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 by way of approval bilateral agreements or strategic assessments;
3. SIMO believes it is inappropriate and ill-advised for the approval powers of the Federal Minister for the Environment to be delegated to the Queensland State Government. We are particularly concerned to ensure the integrity of the RAMSAR sites in Moreton Bay and Islands. In our view, the recent performance of the Queensland Government in regard to mineral sand mining on NSI reinforces our concerns that delegation of federal environmental powers will lead to significant reductions in the level of protection of internationally important environmental sites. We describe what has occurred in the next paragraphs.
4. The 2011 *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act* required the cessation of mineral sand mining by the end of 2019. It also prescribed the mining path to be followed at the Enterprise mine. We understand that this legislation was part of a settlement of the native title claim of the Quandamooka people over Minjerribah and the key dates and actions relating to mineral sand mining were incorporated into a confidential Indigenous Land Use Agreement between the Quandamooka people and the Queensland State Government. There was also agreement for joint management of newly declared and foreshadowed national parks on the Island.
5. At the initiative of the Liberal National Party Government, the Queensland Parliament passed amendments to the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act* in November 2013. These amendments, [according to the Parliamentary Committee](#) report, *enable the mining company, Sibelco Australia Limited, to seek a renewal of mining leases in 2019 at the Enterprise Mine until 2035*. The [Committee report](#) also states that the extra mineral production is valued at \$1.50 billion.
6. SIMO agrees with the [submission](#) of the Environmental Defenders' Office to the Queensland Parliamentary Committee that the 2013 amendments potentially put the interests of an

individual corporation (Sibelco) above those of the broader community. Further, it was '*a step backwards for accountability and transparency and in securing environmental outcomes*'.

7. SIMO also agrees with the [submission](#) of Joel Bolzenius to the Queensland Parliamentary Committee that the amendment *will see the complete removal of legislated buffers between the internationally significant Moreton Bay Ramsar listed wetland and mining disturbance areas*.
8. SIMO is also well aware that Sibelco organised and funded a 'community campaign' in 2011-12 to gain the support of the Liberal National Party. Sibelco hired public relations company Rowland to design and implement a campaign. Rowland documented the campaign in a submission they made to the 2012 Golden Target Awards of the Public Relations Institute of Australia. The campaign titled '*Achieving social, environmental and economic progress in an island community: sand mining and its benefits on North Stradbroke Island*' was the winner of the Public Affairs category.
9. The [Rowland document](#) states
Rowland was engaged by Sibelco Australia to develop and implement a public affairs strategy to influence opinion and political decision-making around the continuation of its sand mining operations on Queensland's North Stradbroke Island (NSI). (our emphasis)

The ways Rowland and Sibelco set out to create support and 'influence opinion' are detailed in the report. It included creating community organisations,; using a 'community benefit fund' and direct spending in the Ashgrove electorate of the (now) Premier Mr Newman. Rowland state,

The strategy was extremely successful and the overall goal exceeded. The newly-elected government committed to extending sand mining operations to 2035. (our emphasis)
10. SIMO recognises that Sibelco was and is entitled to initiate such a campaign. Indeed, it can be seen as an exemplar of political campaigning by a corporation. Moreover in their terms, it was, as Rowland say, '*extremely successful*'.
11. We are, however, extremely concerned that this public relations campaign has led to legislation that in our opinion (a) is potentially damaging to the natural environment of North Stradbroke island and (b) has over-ridden the Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the Quandamooka. In our view, a government that is so susceptible to the seductions of a public relation campaign and so willing, it seems, to deal in private with a mining corporation should not be entrusted with Commonwealth environmental powers.
12. In summary, we believe It is NOT appropriate for the Federal Minister for the Environment to delegate his approval powers to the Queensland State Government under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 by way of approval bilateral agreements or strategic assessments. We strongly recommend that these powers be retained by the Federal Minister for the Environment.

17/11/14

Howard Guille,

Secretary, Stradbroke Island Management Organisation Inc,