

Straddie mine a 'special case'



POLITICAL FOOTBALL: North Stradbroke's Enterprise mine.

Greg Stolz

SAND mining will continue on an expired mining lease on North Stradbroke Island because it is a "special case", the State Government says.

The news prompted angry environmentalists to attack as "spin" the Government's recent announcement to phase out mining and declare most of 'Straddie' a national park.

The giant Enterprise mine, which operates on a lease that expired almost three years ago, will be allowed to con-

tinue until as late as 2027. Conservation groups say this was when the mineral resource was due to expire anyway and have called on the Government to cancel the expired lease to end the "destruction" of ancient dunes.

But Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson says Enterprise is a "special case" and the lease will be renewed – but will not say when.

"While the tenure has expired, it's a working mine," he said. "The phase-out allows for a sensible transition period for

employees of the mines. The Government said at the outset it would consult stakeholders rather than rush a sudden decision regarding Enterprise mine that may result in up to 100 jobs ending overnight.

"We will do it in a way that sees the quickest, most practical end to sand mining on North Stradbroke and a sensible economic transition on the island."

Mr Robertson said other expired leases on Straddie could also be renewed for rehabilitation purposes.

He said he was working with Premier Anna Bligh and Climate Change and Sustainability Minister Kate Jones "to deliver on the Government's vision for a sustainable North Stradbroke Island that can be enjoyed for generations".

"It took a Labor Government to end sand mining and logging on Fraser Island – it will be a Labor Government that phases out sand mining on an island that is equally popular among Queenslanders," Ms Bligh said.

Meanwhile, raw materials

company Unimin has joined forces with pro-mining Straddie residents to produce a TV ad expressing concern about the island's future.

"There has been a groundswell of support from the community who no longer want to be the silent majority," Unimin's Paul Smith said.

"These residents and employees are facing dramatic uncertainty in their futures and want their side of the story told. They are dismayed that their lives are being kicked around as a political football."

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