

Plan to save Straddie

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THE ancient dunes of North Stradbroke Island will be saved under a bold new plan to phase out sand mining and convert the ecosensitive tourist playground to a national park.

After 50 years of mining, 80 per cent of the island will eventually be converted to national park, with 50 per cent of it to be declared

within the next 18 months.

The existing 30 mining leases will be phased out by 2027, with the Government closing the door on any future lease renewal applications from today.

But one lease – at the giant Enterprise mine – will be renewed because its application was lodged before yesterday's policy announcement.

The new plan will give formal native title recognition over much of the island to the Quandamooka people from

2011, involving access to important parts of the island, some land transfer and joint management of national park areas of the island.

Environment Minister Kate Jones – who came out of maternity leave briefly yesterday for the announcement – said the only areas outside the national park allocation would be existing townships, a proposed recreation precinct and land set aside under native title.

About 50 million tonnes of

sand are mined on the island each year, producing 500,000 tonnes of minerals.

Pictures in *The Courier-Mail* last year revealed how excessive sand mining had left much of the island resembling a barren moonscape.

Premier Anna Bligh said a major rehabilitation project was planned, with mining companies expected to contribute.

Mining companies are predicting up to 650 job losses, with Unimin spokesman Paul

Smith saying the plan will siphon \$130 million in economic benefits from the island.

Ms Bligh said the new national park areas were expected to generate up to 400 jobs.

She said the long timeline for the mining phase-out gave companies short term certainty.

Despite the Government pledging not to renew expired leases or consider new ones, a spokesman for Ms Jones said the Enterprise lease was a "special case". "Given that it is a

fully operational mine linked to about 100 jobs, it is likely we will renew," the spokesman said.

Friends of Stradbroke Island president Sue Ellen Carew welcomed the Government's announcement but she said the Enterprise mine should be closed too. "If this lease is renewed, it means the public, the environmental movement and the indigenous community have been conned," she said.

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Cash-strapped couples wed above budget



Councils battling to keep lid on rates rises

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Greg Stolz

LOGAN and Gold Coast residents have avoided hefty rate rises this year.

It was a close call in Logan, with Mayor Pam Parker – who will hand down the city's budget today – revealing council was initially faced with having to lift rates 18 per cent but "clawed that back really significantly". The rise is now likely to be less than half that, with the average household facing a rise of about \$150 a