

TALKING POINT

The phasing out of mining on North Stradbroke Island seems like another political stunt to get the green vote
Seven Coghill, of Acacia Ridge, says the State Government has made this decision with little thought of the miners, the community or indigenous people on the island

The Courier-Mail Time to let nature rule Bay island

IT'S been a long time coming. Environmentalists will be jubilant and miners dejected. But after half a century of activity on North Stradbroke Island, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh is right to wind up sand mining on our jewel in Moreton Bay. Currently less than 2 per cent of this glorious island is a declared national park - a figure most people would consider ridiculously low, and one the Premier wants to lift to 80 per cent by 2027 when the last sand mining operation is closed. It's a fair call, and generous in its timeframe.

Quite properly, Ms Bligh - despite the current climate and Labor's obvious temptation - has not made this declaration in a pique of venom aimed at the mining industry. She has instead tipped her hat to the contribution miners on Stradbroke have made to the local economy, one valued at around \$70 million annually. With about one resident family in every five on North Stradbroke employed in mining, it goes without saying the island owes much of its prosperity, and infrastructure, to the extractive industries.

But it's now time to call it a day, especially as the extent and nature of this extraction sits so much at odds with the island's natural wonder. Aerial photography shows North Stradbroke mining has laid open the earth as it sifts a staggering 50 million tonnes of sand annually for 500,000 tonnes of minerals. In recent times, the land cleared for extraction has grown from 230 to 600ha. In all, more than two-thirds of the island - home to dozens of unique and dwindling species of flora and fauna - is under mining leases. And, while miners have demonstrated corporate responsibility in undertaking successful revegetation programs, the argument remains overwhelming. Three decades after similar activity was banned on Fraser Island, sand mining on fragile North Stradbroke is an anachronism in an age of environmental sensitivity. There's no doubt the local economy will require substantial adaptation as it approaches a post-mine era. But North Stradbroke is better placed than most communities to carve out a share of the 28 per cent of all Queensland tourists who choose to visit natural areas.

We hope the mining companies take the news in a charitable spirit, particularly as they have previously benefited from generous State Government legislation. The Courier-Mail revealed last year, for example, that legal loopholes had allowed mining companies to continue extraction, despite the expiry of up to 13 leases, simply because they had applied to renew those leases. No one could fairly conclude that the Beattie or Bligh governments have been unfriendly to mining interests.

Some, however, will see the Premier's announcement as little more than a cynical Labor bid for Green preferences ahead of the federal election. It's true that minor party support will be critical for Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in Queensland, but Ms Bligh's announcement stretches far beyond a single poll. In the distant future, perhaps the most enduring criticism will be: "Why wasn't sand mining banned sooner?" But even that is preferable to: "Why wasn't it banned at all?"

Grey card needed

AS THE parents of baby boomers now find themselves needing institutional care, we ask who's really caring for the mums and dads of post-war Australia? It's true that any aged-care facility receiving federal funding must provide only trained, accredited workers. But anyone can call themselves an aged-care provider and then circumvent the system by employing untrained sub-contractors. This loophole has seen appalling levels of abuse and neglect of the elderly. The blue card system that safeguards children has been a success. We urge authorities to consider a grey card to similarly protect vulnerable senior Australians.

Responsibility for election comment is taken by David Fagan, 41 Campbell St, Bowen Hills, Qld 4006. Printed and published by Queensland Newspapers Pty. Ltd. (ACN 009 661 779). A full list of our editors, with contact details, is available at news.com.au/couriermail/courstaff.

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Criticism unfair

YOUR correspondent Montique Bond (Letters, June 19-20) suggested that Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson thought that Cameron Doornadge had died of natural causes in the Palm Island watchhouse.

This is certainly not a logical conclusion to be drawn from Atkinson's statement. In fact, his statement indicated that the initial investigation was probably premised (by the investigating officers) on the death in custody being from natural causes.

It was not Atkinson's personal assessment of the cause of death. He was 1400km away, attending to many other matters which demanded his attention.

In a state the size of Queensland, and with so many crimes and incidents occurring every day,

What now for islanders?

there is no way that a police commissioner can be familiar with the day-to-day handling of every incident. Even a regional or local commander cannot be everywhere at every incident. As for ridiculing Atkinson with the denigrative comment about a 34-year-old man dying from natural causes, it is well known that apparently healthy people even younger than 34 years do die suddenly.

Many serious medical conditions are not obvious, and without the benefit of extensive medical testing, there would have been no way of knowing whether Doornadge was healthy or not. Fair, logical criticism is to be welcomed. Unfair, illogical criticism is not.

Michael Fitton, Buderim

Steven Coghill, Acacia Ridge

IN BRIEF

● THE despicable decision by NRL referee Gavin Badger on Friday night which cost the Broncos what should have been the first try of the match against Penrith cost me \$189 in Sportsbet winnings. I insist that the NRL Referees Association direct payment of \$189 to me.
Gavin Hodge, Stafford

● TWO decisions by the referees in disallowing legitimate tries by the Broncos, plus permitting forward passes by Penrith when near our goal line, certainly crushed the spirit of our players and their supporters. Referees should be held accountable for their rulings, especially when their decisions are contentious and unfair.
Trevor Labrooy, Slocks Creek

● I AM not going to forget all Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's failures and backflips just because the election might be later than expected. Regardless of the date, his mining tax will still be a bad tax. He should call the election as soon as possible. It's his chance to do some good for a government, by quickly returning our government to capable hands.
Priscilla Cole, Sippy Downs

● IT'S always interesting to see how insulated politicians misinterpret an election result. The Penrith by-election in NSW is a good example. The Greens think a 12.5 per cent primary is a good thing and that people actually voted Green for their policies, whatever they are, rather than against the major parties. Labor deludes itself into thinking that because they didn't mention federal issues, voters didn't vote on them. The Liberals still think God chose them to rule. Good grief.
Ian Saunders, Ashgrove

● I CAN'T help noticing the silence on underhand price increases - that is, when the price remains the same (or increases) but the contents are reduced. This practice is happening more and more across the board and produces a much larger price increase than retailers would have us believe.
Chris Barron, Bannockburn

Thought for today

One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty.
Proverbs 16:32a
Selected by the Bible Society from the New Revised Standard Version.



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Ultimatum from CMC

SINCE when does the chairman of the Crime and Misconduct Commission have the right to dictate to the Commissioner of Police? The CMC had 20 months to complete their report into the police investigation of the Palm Island tragedy and now CMC chairman Martin Moynihan has given Commissioner Bob Atkinson 14 days to reply, with the rider that an extension of time would be considered if Atkinson gave a justifiable reason. How gracious of Moynihan.

Geoff Ruston, Boronia Heights

PM's stable likely to lose

PRIME Minister Kevin Rudd, after examining the latest opinion polls, professed that he must work harder. If a brumby is taken from the scrub, has his coat clipped, is prettied up and given to Bart Cummings for a year to train to run in the Melbourne Cup, the result will be a failure. With all the hype and training, it is still only a brumby. The show pony who leads our nation is, after all, a brumby. Nothing can make him into a champion.

Alan K. Stevenson, Currumbindi

Compassion in short supply

IN your report about the number of people who have appealed against Brisbane City Council parking violations (C-M, June 19-20), Deputy Mayor Graham Quirk said fines were most often waived on compassionate grounds. He should define compassionate grounds.

Earlier this year I was fined for parking in a blue handicap zone (I suffer from multiple sclerosis). I was displaying my red zone permit, when one of BCC's finest came running down the road to unload materials from my car for work and it was 5.30am. When work mates pointed out my red permit, he pointed to the sign and said: "Can't tell the difference between red and blue hey?"

I contacted BCC and was told that the fine would stand. The fine was paid. I hope the money was used wisely.

Ross Dixon, Drewvale



PENALISED: Harry Kewell was not as lucky as Lee Addy.

Protests on the cards

THE refereeing for the Australia-Ghana match in the World Cup was of poor standard.

Referee Roberto Rosetti handed a red card to Harry Kewell for an offence that was not punishable by a red card, based on FIFA rules which say a player is sent off if he prevents a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball.

The punishment leading to the reduction of the Australian team to 10 men was not just. Affecting play also was Rosetti's decision to give Ghanaian player Lee Addy only a yellow card punishment. FIFA guidelines say that a tackle that endangers the safety of an opponent must be sanctioned as serious foul play.

After staying up late to watch the Soccerros play, I discovered what a waste of time soccer is. It doesn't matter how good a player you are if the referee is against you. It also helps if you are a good actor. Gee, the way they fall down is a joke. All that money, all that time and man, all the noise.

Lindsay Morgan, North Ipswich

Tax campaign queried

IT comes as no surprise that the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees has asked the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to investigate the mining industry's advertisements for scaremongering.

If this new super profits mining tax is so bad, why does the mining industry need to use scare tactics in an attempt to win the debate? Why did the Minerals Council of Australia feel the need to send out spam emails containing the promise of the chance to win \$30,000 for people who supported the mining industry stance?

to such extremes to convince Australians of the disadvantages of this new tax, then it leads me to question the honesty of their

entire campaign. Under this tax all Australians will benefit from our mineral wealth rather than the rich minority directly associated with mining. It's this that seems to upset so many in the industry.
Michael Darcy, Upper Mt Gravatt

J. HANCOCK says he pays more tax than the mining companies (Letters, June 19-20). While he might pay 40 or 45 per cent as he states, this is phased in and is applied only to the top end of his taxable income. A company pays 30 per cent on every dollar. Even if this were reduced to 28 per cent, I understand the 40 per cent mining profits tax is to be charged on every dollar in addition to the company rate.
Glenda Wickman, Kuraby