

Bid to relieve pressure on sand leases

Miner calls for Straddie parks

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SAND mining company Unimin has called on the State Government to declare at least half of North Stradbroke Island national park as soon as possible.

Unimin spokesman Paul Smith said yesterday previously mined land had been rehabilitated to such an extent it could easily be put into state reserves.

It would be a win for all parties, especially the Quandamooka people, who had been waiting years for native title clarification.

Unimin has been under pressure from conservationists who do not want the Government to renew its mining leases.

In 1990, the Goss government said at least half of the island would be declared national park but only about 1 per cent has been protected.

Mr Smith said prompt national

park listing would look after everyone's interests, especially traditional owners.

Stradbroke Island Management Organisation spokeswoman Jan Aldenhoven said the inclusion of any mined land in a national park should not be used as an excuse to approve further mining leases on what was some of the best country left on the island.

Dr Aldenhoven said to the untrained eye, patches of older rehabilitated land looked in good condition but this was not correct.

Because of the homogenisation of the mining process and rehabilitation, the patchwork of differing plant communities had disappeared.

"But the pristine country that hasn't been mined has the wow factor," Dr Aldenhoven said.

"It has the really high dune country with 360 degree views up the spine of the island, across the bay and out to the Pacific Ocean.

"It would be a huge loss to a potential national park if this was to be mined."

Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson said putting more of the island under national park status was a Government ambition but would not say when this might happen.

Friends of Stradbroke Island president Sue Ellen Carew said ancient dunes and pristine old-growth forests would be protected if the Government refused to renew Unimin leases totalling 6019ha.

The island was a standout option for a national park because it was accessible to the largest concentration of Queensland's population and the Government already owned the land so there would be no purchase costs.

It also would provide an opportunity for the island's indigenous population to be employed in their traditional lands.