

MEDIA RELEASE

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North Straddie sand mining must not be shut down early

(AMMA – Australian Mines and Metals Association)

THERE is no justification in prematurely shutting down sand mining on Queensland's North Stradbroke Island before a thorough economic transition plan has had enough time to offset the impacts on jobs, the economy and the local community, peak resources body AMMA has told a Queensland Government inquiry today.

The Queensland Government is holding an inquiry into its plans to shut down Sibelco's sand mining on North Stradbroke by 2019, well before the employer's proposed end date of 2027 that fell well within the previous state government's proposed deadline of 2035.

AMMA argues that with the size and history of North Stradbroke Island, there is no reason why tourism can't be ramped up over a longer, more sustainable transition period.

"North Stradbroke Island has a diversified economy where tourism and sand mining have effectively co-existed for more than 65 years," says AMMA executive director, policy and public affairs, Scott Barklamb.

"The Queensland Government's plan to reshape the island's economy to one that relies primarily on tourism within a three-year timeframe and with just \$20 million, is unrealistic at best and irresponsible at worst.

"Even if the government could attract significant private sector investment into new tourism infrastructure within this tight timeframe, there is no guarantee that visitation would increase dramatically enough to offset the early shutdown of North Stradbroke's major industrial sector.

"Expanded and higher spending North Stradbroke tourism is far from a sure bet, but what is certain is that forcing Sibelco off the island eight years early would cost at least \$70 million and put hundreds of people out of work."

In its [detailed submission](#) to the inquiry, AMMA also criticises the notion that long-serving sand mining employees would be able to take up new, yet-to-be created jobs in tourism on the island.

"Many of the theorised new tourism jobs are not going to easily translate into new opportunities for former sand mining employees. A chef or hotel manager, for instance, is unlikely to be recruited from Sibelco's pool of experienced mining workers," Mr Barklamb continues.

"It would appear the state government's plan is for former mining employees to transition from full-time employment, many earning six figures, to seasonal or casual jobs like waiting tables.

"A highly truncated and premature closure date would harm the economy and community of North Stradbroke Island considerably, perhaps irreparably."

AMMA urges the Queensland Government to engage further with industry, government, Indigenous groups and other community representative bodies to map out an agreed, sustainable transition for North Stradbroke's economy to adjust.

"This would reduce reliance on an unrealistic immediate boost in the tourism sector and rather create a sensible, sustainable transition to the island's long-term future without sand mining," Mr Barklamb concludes.

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