



Winter 2008

# Newsletter

*SIMO was formed in 1978 to stop a bridge from the mainland. Since then, SIMO has waged many campaigns to protect Stradbroke Island's environment and to lobby for conservation, sustainability and wise development.*

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## SIMO Annual General Meeting

10 am-12 noon,  
Saturday 2 August  
at the Point Lookout Hall  
**Kathy Stephens, Senior  
Botanist, Queensland  
Herbarium, will give the  
AGM address.**

Refreshments afterwards.  
Please join us.

### SIMO opposes sand extraction

In April SIMO made a major submission to Redland City Council opposing CRL's application to sell tailings sand as construction material. We included a report that SIMO and FOSI commissioned from Max Winders Associates on noise, dust, safety and other impacts additional trucking would cause. The MWA report is critical of *existing* impacts of trucking through Dunwich, and also of the CRL loading facility that shares the cramped wharf area with two vehicle barges and a water taxi. 'It is doubtful even that the current operations of loading mineral sands comply with the Planning Scheme with regards to noise, dust and traffic... It is considered that the proposed major expansions of the operation to include construction sand export through the facility has little chance of satisfying the provisions of the Planning Scheme.' (MWA report)

The RCC Planning Scheme is the sole remaining potential obstacle to CRL's proposal – the Environmental Protection Authority and other agencies having already granted approval. SIMO considers the EPA erred by not giving due weight to the fact that "Sand for construction purposes is not a mineral pursuant to the Mineral Act 1989 and **cannot be extracted** under the Environmental Authority"... (SIMO's emphasis)... SIMO draws attention to this legal aspect: sand on a mining lease is not extracted – **it is the mineral that is extracted** – therefore taking sand off lease for sale cannot be classed as an extractive industry.... [T]here is no case for the sale of the sand for any purpose.'

Further, 'It appears that the whole application is based on a fundamentally erroneous proposition, that is, that the miner CRL is entitled to carry out its mineral sand mining operations, not solely for mineral sand mining but in a way that produces two products, one of which is not a mineral...The...application depends upon the proposition that [tailings sand] can be lawfully produced by the existing mining operation. That is rejected as quite **unlawful.**' ...

'The holder of a mining lease to allow extraction of mineral sand has no more entitlement to regard such a lease as an authority to create stockpiles of sand, other than mineral sand, than it does to treat the mining lease as authority to conduct a circus, drill for oil or ...to tear asunder the land for any purpose other than the extraction of the specified minerals. The fact that sand is disturbed in the mining process does not justify creation of stockpiles for purposes extraneous to the extraction of the mineral.' (SIMO submission)

On the question of environmental impacts to Dunwich, MWA finds CRL's development application to be wanting in many respects.

'The Quandamooka peoples have apparently been led to believe their native title rights are impotent: "...as the project is part of an existing mining lease, and an existing mining application, native title does not apply"; and that approach is now being recycled to lull the RCC into believing that there are no native title considerations to be taken into account.'... 'The EPA failed to include conditions about where sand for the stockpiles is to come from: which other mine sites in addition to Enterprise? The EPA failed to restrict CRL from moving sand from Yarraman or another future mining site to the stockpiles to be shipped off the island. The EPA also failed to stipulate the maximum amount of sand in the stockpiles. This leaves it open for CRL to replenish the stockpiles into the future.' – from SIMO's submission

'In 50 years of mining on Stradbroke, CRL has coped with overburden, also called bulking or swell. 'Swell' is a normal part of mining. It is the increase in volume that occurs when compacted sand is dug out. This extra volume is accounted for in the mine path planning... CRL now presents 'swell' as an unavoidable fact of nature, beyond its control. Not so. CRL chooses, solely for profit, not to deposit the sand back in the end-of-mine void and repair the environmental damage caused by mining. Coping with overburden is a basic condition of the Environmental Authority under which CRL is permitted to mine. Just because CRL is mining deeper than ever before and displacing much more sand, making it expensive to move this displaced sand to fill the void, that is not an acceptable justification for exporting sand.' – from SIMO/FOSI's presentation

'[N]o attempt has been made in the [traffic] report to address the conflict of truck traffic to and from the barge-loader with the traffic and parking arrangements for the vehicular ferries located in the Marine Activity Area... [Trucks are likely] to queue outside the boundary of the barge-loading facility. This will not only have a significant impact upon the movement and parking of private vehicles using the vehicular ferries but will introduce a significant public safety risk to pedestrians and to passengers wishing to step outside their vehicles while they wait for their barge...'

'The expansion of an industrial use immediately adjacent to a tourism gateway is self evidently most ill advised.'

On the potential for dust nuisance, the MWA report notes: 'The [CRL] report does not acknowledge that there is a dust nuisance created by fugitive emissions from the existing dumping, stockpiling and loading into the conveyor hopper of ilmenite exported through the barge-loading facility... The problem with the subject barge-loading facility is its proximity to residential and heavily-utilised public areas... [O]n p.10, para 1 [of the Pacific Air & Environment report of 2003], it is noted that the EPA's acceptable limit of 120 mg/m<sup>2</sup>/day for insoluble dust deposition was greatly exceeded at the Dunwich monitoring site where the maximum was 576 mg/m<sup>2</sup>/day. This... needs further investigation by Council to see if it is related to the transport of sand to the barge-loader and its subsequent stockpiling and loading... [N]either the existing nor proposed expanded operations at the barge-loading facility satisfy Conditions (7) or (C346) of the lease from the Queensland Government.'

On the noise problem, MWA concludes: 'The analysis of potential noise impacts from the barge-loading facility... show that the noise from the loading operation on that spatially-constrained site will increase by 5-6dB(A) at the nearest residences...'

SIMO considers this development application has far-reaching implications for Stradbroke Island's future. Should the Council approve it, the gate is open for other mining leases to be turned into quarries. That means that potentially 70% of the island – the extent currently under mining leases – could become quarries. Quarrying and removal of sand would have irreparable impacts on the island's topography and environment, and could also affect the capacity of the aquifer (which is composed of sand) to capture and hold water.

SIMO and FOSI followed up our submissions with a presentation to Council in June, in which we noted that **sand mining is coming to an end on Stradbroke Island: mineral reserves are expected to be exhausted in ten to 15 years' time**. What is to happen to the island's environment, economy and population? Will Stradbroke be forced to endure a repeat of the past 60 years projected into the future: damaging extractive industries that lock up large tracts of the island in perpetuity?

In order to assess this development application adequately, RCC must look beyond the economic benefit of a single sand export operation, and consider the bigger picture for Stradbroke. Now it is time to reverse the era of exploitation and to usher in a new era of Native Title, National Parks, and an economy based on caring for the environment.

SIMO warmly thanks everyone who sent in a submission to Council and signed the petition we circulated opposing the application. The petition tally came to **739**, with some signatures arriving after the official cut-off. Dunwich recorded 199 signatures; Amity Point, 20; Point Lookout, 166; and there were 354 from other places, many in Brisbane. Council is now carefully deliberating the matter; a decision will be made possibly by the end of July. *Jackie Cooper*

Phil Weightman, MP

Dear Phil

We were heartened when the Minister said that the State has an obligation to protect Stradbroke, and it's now time for serious talking about more National Park on the island. Many locals have been waiting 30 years to hear those words.

Eighteen Mile Swamp and the southern part of the island are likely to be the first additional areas gazetted. We want to see all the 16,000 ha that was to have been declared in 1992

placed under protection; but we appreciate the practicalities of untangling the land tenure knots. It will take time. We think all leases should be called in as they expire, and not renewed.

Also we hope to see a program of progressive announcements of more National Park, eventually to link up the island continuously from south to north.

The environmental reasons are compelling. The Ramsar profile provides a sound indication of the areas that should be National Park.

We are concerned that koala habitat in the north remains unprotected; the mainland population is likely to be extinct within the decade. We don't have too much time to put in place all the necessary mechanisms to safeguard their territory here.

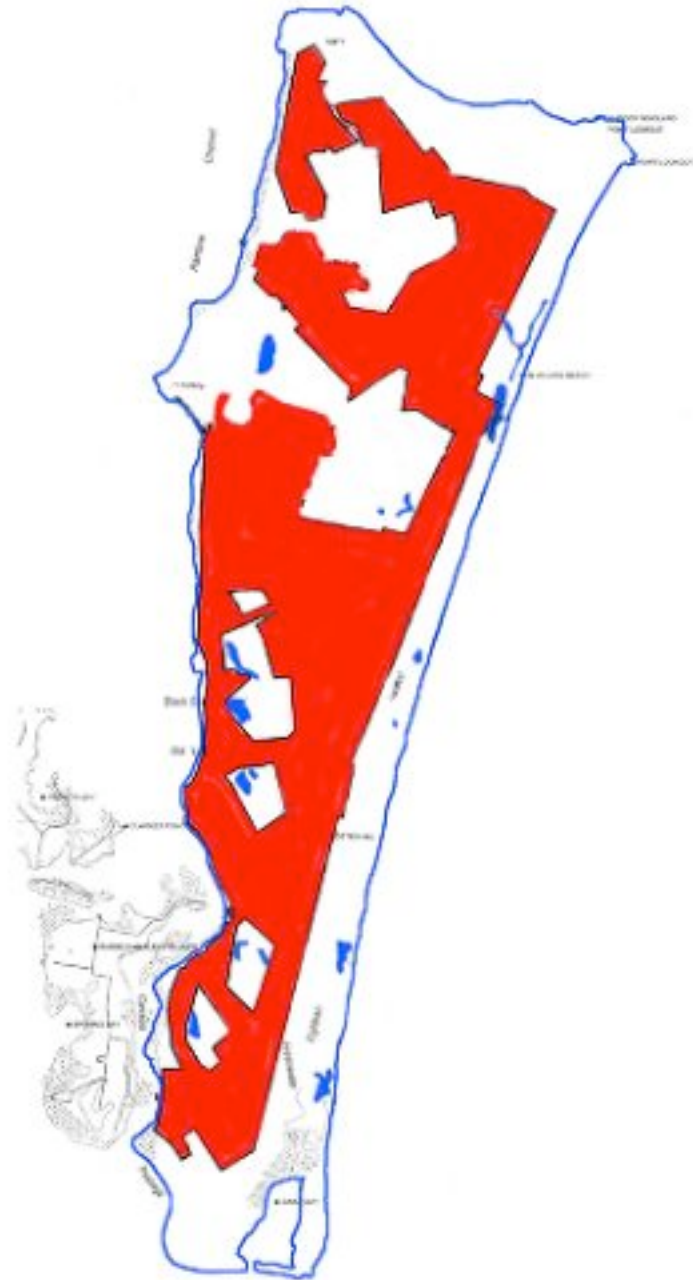
Quandamooka's input is vital: the cultural dimension of National Parks is rarely discussed, yet this is the wellspring of the island's spirit and a living link with more than 20,000 years of stewardship.

SIMO is well aware of the deep extent of your personal commitment to this cause. We are very encouraged by your enthusiasm, and we'd just like to say thank you.

Kind regards

SIMO Committee

## 70% of Stradbroke Island is under mining lease



This map shows the extent of mining leases on Stradbroke: all the red areas, which are off-limits to the public. CRL holds onto expired mining leases even after mining operations have ceased, and renews them, and apparently has no intention to relinquish any leases for another ten to 15 years – disappointing all those hoping for increased National Park and greater accessibility on the island.

In 1992, a plan to gazette 16,000 ha (roughly the area listed under the international Ramsar Convention) came to nothing. Now the Minister for Sustainability, Andrew McNamara, is actively considering declaring new National Park on Stradbroke during the current parliamentary term. He visited the island on 26 June and toured the southern areas, and also saw Enterprise, and Unimin's operations.

The international Ramsar Convention, which is administered by the Federal government, exists for the conservation of wetlands and interconnecting land, to protect the habitats of migratory birds. Much of Stradbroke is listed under Ramsar.

## Wildlife encounters

**17 April** Beach Stone Curlew on Flinders Beach.

**17 April** Juvenile Gannets arrived from their Tasman Sea crossing on top of a south-easterly blow.

**17 May** Huge waterspouts under a long line of flat-bottomed low cloud. Spray coming off the base would have been as tall as a 20-foot building; could easily see the vortex in the middle.

**18 May** First whales spotted. 708 humpbacks counted to 25 June.



*We've seen two new-born calves so far. They are 14 feet long when born and weigh 2.5 tons.*

**28 May** Found a Juvenile Black Browed Albatross on Main Beach.

**29 May** Spotted a Buff-banded Rail in the Cylinder Beach cotton trees.

**7 June** Flock of Royal Spoonbills flew over the headland.

**22 June** Very large Green turtle washed in on Frenchman's; had a tag; shell in excellent condition; no signs of floating disease and no sign of any other trauma. 106.5 cm shell: adult female.

**25 June** Fairy Penguin washed up on Deadman's Beach.

**26 June** Spotted 119 whales today, which beats the record of sightings in a single day by 14.

*Jennie Truman*



*Australasian Gannet*



*Buff-banded Rail*

*Drawings by Jennie Truman*

## Dugongs and turtles suffer boat strikes

From Simon Baltais of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside branch: 'Moreton Bay is recognised as suffering the highest mortality rate of dugongs in Queensland, and it's likely to continue while important dugong and turtle feeding grounds are poorly protected.

'Boating traffic is spiralling upwards, and speeding boats across Go Slow zones – areas set up to slow vessels over important dugong and turtle feeding areas – happen frequently. The dugong and turtle mortality rate is disgraceful and will likely continue, as proposed protection measures in the draft Moreton Bay Zoning Plan are inadequate.'

The main cause of turtle casualties in the Marine Park is speeding boats. Ferries to and from the Bay Islands and large powered vessels travelling from the Gold Coast to Moreton Bay have a major negative impact on larger marine species. Take one day:

*Date 5 May 2008: Two Dugongs (Dugong dugon) found by rangers at 11am and 1.30pm respectively. Location: Small ships channel, western end of Rous channel, Moreton Bay. Both adult females, one lactating. Both 270cm. Carcasses in good condition (fresh).*

*Cause of death: One boat strike, other possible head trauma*

The health of Moreton Bay's seagrass seems dependent on large marine animals like dugongs and green turtles, and the health of the commercial and recreational fishing industry is certainly dependent on healthy seagrass.

Less than 1% of Moreton Bay is fully protected. This is expected to increase only to 15%, well short of the 30% recommended minimum.

## Feral animals destroy island wildlife

Feral animals are a problem on North Stradbroke Island. Foxes (and feral dogs and cats) kill birds, koalas, wallabies and kangaroos, as well as smaller marsupials, lizards and even baby turtles.

A fox occupies a territory of a square kilometre. All parts of the island now contain a full quota of foxes. The animals are healthy. They are often glimpsed around townships and near beaches.

Foxes are omnivores that eat everything from turtle eggs to koalas. Dogs have been spotted in different parts of the island, and there are probably two packs of wild dogs roaming. Some of these dogs are very large and would take on a human without difficulty. A wild dog was seen killing a large kangaroo on Main Beach this winter. Earlier in the year, a pack of three domestic dogs was observed tearing a koala apart, in broad daylight, in Dunwich. Dogs can kill koalas without even drawing blood, simply by biting the animals, which have very tough skin, and causing the internal organs to haemorrhage.

No one knows how many birds and other small animals are killed by cats, both feral and domestic.

The problem of wild and domestic animals killing wildlife has been brought into sharp focus this winter by a recent spate of kangaroo deaths. In a single week in June, nine kangaroos were killed in or near Point Lookout – and also a couple of wallabies were killed on the main road to the Point, sadly too common an occurrence.

Of the four kangaroos that died in Point Lookout, three appear to have been hit by cars, one possibly first chased by a dog; and a joey was mauled by a (domestic) dog. Two dogs were seen eating a kangaroo on Main Beach. And four dead roos were seen on Main Beach on Friday 20 June, just south of the access from George Nothling Drive, apparently also killed by dogs.

In addition to these nine, four kangaroos were shot on Main Beach towards Jumpinpin. At the same time last year, someone also shot kangaroos in this area.

It is an alarming tally of dead wildlife for a quiet winter week when visitors are few and roads usually calm. Preventive measures need to be trialled. They could include feral animal eradication; domestic dog and cat control enforcement, plus an awareness program that targets locals and visitors about the impacts domestic animals have on wildlife; advisory signs for drivers where kangaroos and wallabies are frequently seen; informing locals and visitors how to encounter wildlife safely; and advertising the local rescue number at Point Lookout, Amity, Flinders and Dunwich. *Jackie Cooper*



*Death on Tramican Street: one of several kangaroos killed at Point Lookout after being struck by a vehicle and/or chased by domestic dogs, in one week in June 2008. Photograph by Jan Aldenhoven*

*The koala is the State's fauna emblem.*

*Koalas are the world's fourth most iconic animal. Redland City has 50% of koalas of the Koala Coast 50% of Redlands koalas are dying from chlamydia.*

*Chlamydia kills koalas and renders females sterile.*

*The mainland population is under 5000, the critical level below which the gene pool is affected.*

*Cars killed 5000 koalas in SEQ in the past ten years. 1750 were killed in the Redlands.*

*Koalas have an 80% chance of mortality if attacked by a dog.*



*Young koala photographed April 2008 on the peat road to Amity Point*

Wetlands are areas of permanent or periodic/intermittent inundation, with water that is static or flowing, fresh brackish or salt, including areas of marine water, the depth of which at low tide does not exceed 6m.

A wetland is described by its ecological system, of which there are five classifications: Marine, Estuarine, Riverine, Palustrine, Lacustrine.

SIMO was delighted to be asked to participate; and will continue the dialogue to help safeguard the island water bodies, and important Moreton Bay Ramsar areas.

For more information visit the Queensland Wetlands Program Website.

## **First Stradbroke koala mapping project**

SIMO welcomes the imminent inclusion of NSI's koalas for the first time in the State Koala Plan. From the end of July, Stradbroke's koala population is to be mapped. Previous partial surveys of island koalas have been undertaken by volunteers. Now, Redland City Council, UQ and CRL have provided in-kind support to match a \$61,000 grant from the EPA to establish a population estimate for NSI. This will make it possible to incorporate the island koalas into the Redlands planning scheme and future State mapping.

Council and CRL have provided further funds to fit 20 koalas with GPS collars. Ten koalas are to be caught on mining leases, and ten off-lease; they will be tracked, relaying information about their movements around the island and key habitat areas.

Consultants GHD will randomly choose several areas throughout Stradbroke to establish as transects in which data are systematically gathered. It is important that the transects are randomly selected: while the supposition is that koalas live mostly on the west coast among the Swamp mahoganies, it is important to look for them also on the east coast in order to gain a reasonable degree of certainty in creating a map of the island population. This work will be done in September or October. It is expected that by Christmas a map will be ready to go to the EPA for comment.

Key threats to koalas are vehicle strike, fire and dogs. Each township is located within koala habitat, so dogs and vehicles – perhaps inevitably – have killed a number. Car strikes are thought to account for about 20 deaths per year; 50% of roadkill occurs on mining roads. Fire threat comes specifically from wildfires in which canopy burn occurs. But some burn-offs in recent years near habitat areas have got out of control, and no one knows how many koalas would have been affected.

The current island population is not established. Estimates vary between 1000-2000 animals.

Stradbroke Island is unique in having the only naturally occurring koala population in Australia. The isolation of the island koalas makes them a prime subject for genetic research.

*Thanks to Dan Carter, Senior Adviser Natural Environment, RCC, for information on the NSI Koala Mapping Project*

## **Expert review of waterbodies and wetlands mapping**

The EPA recently completed draft baseline wetlands maps for SEQ as part of the Wetlands Mapping and Classification Project under the Queensland Wetlands Program. SIMO took part in broadly validating the EPA wetland mapping products, to assess useability and to inform further improvement, with particular attention to NSI, South Stradbroke Island and Moreton Island.

The wetland systems of NSI include 77 sites. Much of the data are supplied by CRL which has mining leases covering most of the island's water bodies. Several sites have been degraded and/or destroyed by the sandmining process. This was of special interest to the Workshop Chair, Mike Ronan, who has asked SIMO to provide current information; a focus of his project is to protect and rehabilitate wetlands. A key project in this mapping program is understanding why wetlands are valuable. This links to wildlife habitat, agriculture, waterways, fisheries and thus the economics, in a cultural and historical context. Delivering comprehensive maps and data for wetlands in Queensland will enable wetland managers to make robust, effective and accurate decisions about the protection and care of wetlands. *Susan Martin*

## Holiday letting code of conduct

Something unprecedented occurred on 3 July. The Mayor, Melva Hobson, personally facilitated a meeting of RCC officers, holiday letting agents, local police, residents of Point Lookout, and Cr Ogilvie. The meeting discussed ways to curb the antisocial behaviour that often blights residential areas during holidays. It was the first time that all parties had met to deal with the problem. Helpful suggestions included better ways to inform visitors, a rental house register, and local laws. RCC will review and report later.



## SIMO receives a vice-regal invitation

SIMO was invited to the Queen's Birthday cocktail party celebration held at Government House on 9 June. Of course this is not the real date of the Queen's birthday, but was chosen to ensure the best chance of sunny weather in England. In Brisbane it was a little gloomy and chilly. Guests were piped into Government House where they mingled with the Governor, glamorous as ever in ice blue shantung and silver stilettos. She made a brief speech and thanked everyone in the room for the contributions they had made to their communities (so *that's* why SIMO was there). The kilted bagpiper then struck up Happy Birthday to You (does this happen in England, we wondered?), and then it was time to go home.

## Sandmining: EPA-approved revised landform criteria do not ensure replacement of what was there before

Since 2002, SIMO and FOSI have endeavoured to participate in a process conducted by the EPA to revise the criteria governing how CRL is required to put back the island's landscape after mining. But at key junctures we were shut out; and only after the contentious new landscape criteria were safely approved in November 2007 were we informed of what had occurred.

Formerly, CRL had been obliged under law to satisfy Undertaking 14, which requires that the landform be reinstated after mining to reflect 'as near as practicable' the premine topography. Now all that has changed.

Ever since the new criteria were approved, SIMO and FOSI have requested a cogent explanation of the outcomes the criteria will deliver. Neither the EPA nor CRL could oblige. Finally, in June, CRL called a meeting to explain the criteria. Paul Smith, CRL's Environmental and Community Relations Manager, set forth the (eye-wateringly) complex mathematics of the new landform criteria; and tried to justify the use of large geomorphological areas to establish the *x* and *y* of premining landform, instead of taking the *actual* premine landform directly in the mine path as the (visual) model for postmine landform reconstruction, ie, what it looks like.

It was all a bit too pat. The logic went something like this: *because we have retained so many terrain elements (such as aspect, height and slope) within a given area – even though at no specific point in the mining block do they relate to what used to be there – this is acceptable landforming*. This is nonsense. There is an infinite number of compilations and permutations that could fit any given scenario, satisfying the same mathematical recipe, so which one is more acceptable, and on what grounds? The criteria don't allow for answers to such questions.

Rather than establishing a strictly objective method, as the EPA and CRL claim, the new landform criteria in fact generate a subjective approach, albeit one that is no longer tied to the premine landscape.

The middle of the meeting became a little bit more interesting, with an explanation of which mining blocks (100-metre segments of the mine path) are in balance: the criteria call for the aspect/orientation of the landform in a given mining block (not geomorphological area) to be put back exactly as it was. This is more like it, we were beginning to think. But the excitement of hey, we could be getting somewhere, soon faded as it became evident that there is no control over maximising the number of balanced blocks. In fact, CRL could have **no** balanced blocks in a mine path – and that would be considered acceptable.

SIMO pointed out that both Gordon and Ibis mines, which produced postmine landforms acceptable to us, had 50% of balanced blocks; therefore, we argue, 50% should be the control in the new criteria. But this notion was thrown out by both the EPA and CRL.

Then the final nail in the coffin. Paul Smith showed the three-dimensional computer model of the future mine path at Enterprise, pointing out that it did not comply with the new criteria yet: they had to tweak it a bit. But this landscape was vastly different from what was there previously. Gone are the ancient lines of the south-east/north-west dunes and valleys pointing into the central island from the escarpment. Instead, what CRL has forecast is a very large (higher than the escarpment) ridge running south-west/north-east, and a very large canyon inland from this, most of which will be a waterbody, and probably swampy land of some description.

*Jennie Truman*

### Island books

*North Stradbroke Island* (\$25.80) and *A Taste of Stradbroke. A flavour of the island, its cuisine and cooking community* (\$19.90), are available.

These are two essential and useful island books. If you want to order copies, please contact SIMO.

Funds from the sale of both books go to help SIMO.

### SPOT A KOALA?

Please send your koala observations to SIMO, with your name and contact details, date of sighting, time, location (as precisely as possible), number of

animals, gender and condition if known, and any other details to



[jan@wildlifefilms.com.au](mailto:jan@wildlifefilms.com.au).

We will ensure this gets into the official EPA database.

The information is important.

### Join SIMO

#### SIMO membership

Single \$11.00

Family \$13.20

Concession/student \$5.50

Send payments to:

**The SIMO Treasurer**

**PO Box 4**

**Point Lookout 4183**

**SIMO ABN 89 682 323 435**

**Reminder to join us for  
the 30th**

## **SIMO Annual General Meeting**

10 am-12 noon,

Saturday 2 August

at the Point Lookout Hall

**Kathy Stephens, Senior**

**Botanist, Queensland**

**Herbarium, will give the**

**AGM address.**

Hope to see you there.

### Norm's Seat

A good many years ago, SIMO installed a seat on North Headland to acknowledge Norm Rahnsleben's efforts in constructing walking tracking around the headlands.

The original seat made by Lance Blemmings was constructed of cypress donated by Greg Litherland of the Amity Mill. Lance Blemmings also provided a plaque. The installation was marked by an on-site picnic attended by SIMO members. But the seat, known locally as Norm's Seat, finally succumbed to the harsh elements of North Headland and needed replacement.



*Installation under way. The team includes Bob Morrison, aka South African Bob, Chris the painter, and his friend, George York and Tony Durbidge. The new Norm's Seat occupies the same premier position on the North Headland.*

In 2007 a new seat was crafted by Howard Bell from a hardwood tree felled on a CRL mining lease. Last winter, when the new seat was installed, it was George York who welded stirrups to the base of the seat to secure it in its concrete base. It was also George who motivated a workforce to transport the new, heavy seat to the site and to remove the old weathered structure.

There was no picnic as with the first seat. In true island style, the operation was completed with a truck, eleven bags of concrete mix, and a carton of stubbies. *Ellie Durbidge*

*Editor's note:* Norm Rahnsleben was Ellie's father. He first visited Stradbroke Island in 1926 or 27. He married Gladys and they settled in Point Lookout before the war. Four generations later, Ellie is now a great-grandmother, the various generations of her family all still living at Point Lookout.

### National Park for Bribie

Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association played a role in the gazettal of 3690 ha of additional National Park on the island, on 24 April. It is excellent news, encouraging us to hope for more National Parks on Stradbroke. The new National Park on Bribie will help protect the central swamps and southern areas around White Patch and Bellara. However, BIEPA, remains concerned about environmental problems on Bribie, including the dozing of dunes and vegetation at Woorim, and a proposed desalination plant.

NSI too is identified as a potential site for a 400 megalitre desal plant. Desalination is a measure of last resort. SIMO urges government to concentrate planning strategies instead on recycling, better water harvesting measures, and minimising water use.