



## **STRADBROKE NEEDS MORE NATIONAL PARK**

How much of North Stradbroke Island is National Park? The answer might surprise you. *Less than 2%*: Blue Lake National Park, declared way back in 1962.

Why isn't there more National Park? That's a question we ask. Some parts of Stradbroke are Conservation Areas and others are on the Register of the National Estate. Much of the island is habitat for migratory birds, and listed under the international Ramsar convention that protects these places.

Although these listings are important, they don't offer National Park protection. Most of the wetlands, major features like Eighteen Mile Swamp, Brown Lake and Flinders Beach swamp, as well as numerous smaller water bodies, remain vulnerable. Koala habitats also need protecting. It's time these precious places were all under a single powerful conservation umbrella.

The good news is that the State Government is preparing to gazette new National Park on Stradbroke. An announcement is expected in 2009.

SIMO is urging the Government to include all the Ramsar areas as National Park – encompassing most of the lakes, lagoons and swamplands – as well as the Scenic Wildflower Reserve near Aranarawai Creek; and also Mt Bippo Penbean and Brown Lake. Previously mined, rehabilitated land could be added to the National Park progressively as mining leases expire.

Unlocking Stradbroke will enable people to explore and enjoy the many beautiful places deep in the interior of the island.

There are sandy tracks; forests of banksias and grass trees; open expanses of peat fringed by lagoons and paperbarks where you stand a good chance of spotting a koala; reed-lined perched lakes where the tinkling chorus of hundreds of frogs echoes across the water. Tracking into scribbly gum forest, lucky bushwalkers could catch a glimpse of the unique Stradbroke golden wallaby. From the top of the island you can take in the magnificent views across the bush to the Pacific Ocean, to Moreton Island, the Glasshouse Mountains, Mount Warning, and the Gold Coast.

Stradbroke has around 570 species of native plants. Something is flowering all year, food for birds, gliders, bats and insects. On the high ancient dunes there are patches of rare bonsai heathland that has disappeared from the mainland.

Stradbroke Island is a bushwalker's paradise.

How long until we can experience its wonders? That will depend on how much of the island the Government decides to gazette.

Seventy per cent of Stradbroke is under mining lease and off-limits to the public. SIMO hopes we might see 70% of Stradbroke Island National Park, accessible to all.