



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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TWEED RIVER ENTRANCE SAND BYPASSING PROJECT

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (9.52 pm): Since the Tweed River sand bypass project became fully operational in 2001, almost 10 million cubic metres of sand have been pumped or dredged from the Tweed River and the nearby outlet. This agreement between the Queensland and New South Wales state governments costs \$9.2 million per year to run. Costs are currently shared between the states, with Queensland and the Gold Coast City Council paying for half and the remaining 50 per cent coming from New South Wales. Well before I was elected to parliament in 2004 I was raising the serious safety and environmental issues resulting from this project. On numerous occasions I have called for better management of the project, some flexibility in the pumping grid area, and proper monitoring and reviews.

According to the Surfrider Foundation, problems with this project are smothering and significant degradation of Kirra Reef, loss of world-famous Kirra Point and other surfing breaks, increase of safety risks in patrolled bathing areas, and loss of business and tourism due to loss of beach amenity. The aim of this sand bypass system was twofold—to establish and maintain a safe, navigable entrance to the Tweed River and to provide a continuing supply of sand to nourish southern Gold Coast beaches and maintain beach amenity. Geoff Provest, the member for Tweed, and I joined champion surfer Mick Fanning and others to lobby for an audit of the sand bypass over two years ago, but still nothing.

Recently I read comprehensive environmental reports from 1994, 1995 and 1997 conducted by the Queensland and New South Wales governments relating to this 24- to 25-year project that made distinct recommendations to preserve Kirra Reef. The reports noted that the high conservation value of Kirra Reef and its associated flora and fauna warrants careful design and implementation of measures to protect the habitat. The principal concern regarding Kirra Reef is the proximity of sand dumping and the possibility of smothering the habitat, and yet this was allowed to happen. Last week I lodged a request under the Freedom of Information Act seeking all contracts relating to the TRESBP project, including environmental management plans.

Ongoing secrecy around this project smacks of a cover-up. If the Bligh government has nothing to hide, then why is there no accountability and no transparency? The council has been waiting since July 2007 for a reply from the EPA about the feasibility of it dumping dredge soil somewhere other than in the bay and a supplementary outlet. But until we see what is in the contract, we do not know if these key recommendations have been breached or if they are included at all. It is disgraceful that the Queensland and New South Wales governments have sat on their hands for eight years while almost 10 million cubic metres of sand has covered our reef and turned Kirra Beach into a desert. This is a problem of their own making through poor management and lack of community consultation.

I congratulate Kirra Point Committee and Surfrider for their outstanding efforts, especially with the Australia Day paddle-out. Relevant ministers from Queensland and New South Wales should have got together long before now. The damage has already occurred and corrective action must be taken immediately to rescue the reef and review the sand pumping and dredging project. You cannot bury your heads in the sand any longer. This makes a mockery of Labor's environmental credentials. Shame on you! You have turned on the pump and you have turned away.