




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH

Road Closures; Bulk Suppliers

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (5.59 pm): I rise in the House to talk firstly about road closure policies and their effect on traffic in the Gulf of Carpentaria. After the Brisbane 2011 floods the law was changed so that roads are now closed, without discretion—the Police Service will monitor these closures—when water across a road reaches a depth of 200 millimetres, which in Normanton and Karumba can result from just a king tide. There does not even have to be rain around for those roads to be closed. That has a very significant effect on traffic and industry in that area. There is a lot of industry in that area such as fishing and cattle. Roads being closed when water reaches a depth of 200 millimetres can really affect their way of life. There is a permit system, but it is onerous and difficult to manage.

Local people are really struggling to manage this issue. I am not prepared to comment on how this might affect people in other areas of the state. This law may be relevant in other areas of the state but it is certainly not practical or reasonable to expect people to work under these provisions in that area. Mayor Fred Pascoe has been vocal on this issue. People in the area need help as the law is too onerous and is making things very difficult.

The government needs to look at this issue in order to free up industry and movement in the area. People should be able to use their discretion so that road trains are not being stopped. Road trains can safely go through 400 or 600 millimetres of water—even up to a metre—to get food and other goods through to people in flood times. They are being stopped by what would be considered a trickle over the road. Another point is that these are mostly shallow rivers and watercourses. It is pretty flat up there so the water is slow moving. There has to be discretion available, and common sense has to be brought back to the issue. The government really needs to look at this to make things more workable—not just make a knee-jerk reaction to the issue after the floods.

Another issue very relevant to that same area of the world is the move towards bulk suppliers and supercontractors. Often towns in those areas are built on road crews. They are often the biggest business in those towns, whether they be council or a private contractor. They are starting to lose contracts to supercontractors or bulk suppliers. There may be some small financial benefit in using them in some cases, but great damage can be caused to communities by smashing a hole in what are big businesses for towns but relatively small contractors. That can really be damaging to communities. The procurement policy needs to give more weight to local contractors compared to bulk suppliers, which can be very damaging to smaller communities.