




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

MOTION: ETHANOL

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (5.55 pm): It is a wonderful opportunity to rise to talk on an issue like this. It is something we should be talking about every week. It provides excellent opportunities for this government to develop new industry. I notice with great interest that we are talking about ideologies here and we are coming to the thrust of why we exist as a party and as a third force in the House. There seems to be abhorrence any time we mention subsidies or protections. What we are talking about is preserving a broad industry base in Australia. That is not happening and our industries are dying. There seems to be such abhorrence any time we mention the word subsidy or tariff; it is polarising the debate. This is about giving people a hand to survive and providing a floor price in the market for them. It is done everywhere else in the developed world. China is starting a mandate and other developed nations are doing it, but Australia in its wisdom believes it is a terrible idea and that we should not do it. It results in cheaper fuel in other countries, but people think we should not do it here.

I heard with great interest that the Treasurer fell into the great old trap of saying that it will increase food prices. That is rubbish. He should listen to the same reports that were given to the Liberal federal government when it was in power which said the threat was that the food prices could be reduced because there is a threat of an excess of grain where the by-product is a feed source for cattle. That is why we have such a competitive cattle feed industry in the United States because they have access to that grain. That is a misleading point that the Treasurer made.

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order. I did not make the comment attributed to me by the member and I ask that he withdraw it. I find the comment offensive.

Madam SPEAKER: The member has found the comment offensive.

Mr KATTER: I withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: The comment has been withdrawn. I call the member for Mount Isa.

Mr KATTER: There has never been a better time for the government to work with corporate Queensland to accelerate the growth of the state's biofuel industry. I recognise the fine work performed by the government's business and industry portal in promoting biofuels. The world's consumption of biofuel, in particular ethanol, is growing so rapidly, particularly in Brazil, Canada and the United States. The opportunity for Queensland to take advantage of this demand is inarguable. Mandating 10 per cent or 20 per cent of ethanol into existing fuel supplies will deliver a vast range of opportunities, economic and social benefits and make this state the envy of Australia. Importantly for Queensland and its regions, a larger biofuel industry in Australia will boost regional development as well as reduce air pollution and progress towards achieving greater food and fuel security in our own right.

The other benefits of blending fuel with ethanol are that it is nontoxic, water soluble and highly biodegradable. The American Lung Association in metropolitan Chicago credits ethanol blended

reformulated petrol as reducing smog-forming emissions in the city by 25 per cent since 1990. If we are serious about doing anything about emissions, this is where we should start. Ethanol reduces particulate emissions, especially fine particles that pose a health threat to children, senior citizens and individuals suffering from respiratory ailments. In Australia the most promising biofuels with commercial prospects are ethanol and biodiesel. Biofuels can cause a renewal in agriculture and rural Australia that would benefit the entire nation as well as creating a much cleaner environment. In 2005 the AMA wrote to the federal government detailing its support for the mandatory use of ethanol and petrol in the interests of protecting and improving human health: 10 per cent in petrol and 20 per cent in diesel biofuel blends. In 2004 the CSIRO reported that more people die from air pollution in Australia than in road accidents: 2,400 deaths compared with 1,700 on the road.

Many of those deaths have been linked to pollution from motor vehicles. If we want to arrest the number of deaths in Australia, this is a much better place to start. Vehicle emissions account for up to 65 per cent of urban pollution. Ethanol contains 35 per cent oxygen. This results in more complete fuel combustion, which reduces harmful tailpipe emissions. Ethanol displaces the use of toxic petrol components such as benzene, which is a carcinogen and is known to cause leukaemia.

We believe that a mandate of this nature has the potential to generate up to 50,000 rural and regional jobs. Investment in the growth of Queensland's ethanol industry would be a great victory for common sense, the environment and industry in Australia. Extraordinarily, 2,000 to 3,000 people are dying in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane from tailgate fumes. These figures are from a report prepared by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics of New South Wales in 2005. These are dire statistics. This is a health issue. More importantly, this is a very big key to unlocking the wealth of this state and preserving a broad economic base in Queensland which is currently eroding. We rely far too heavily on mining. This measure would boost agriculture. I sincerely hope that the government supports this motion.

(Time expired)