




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH

North Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (8.19 pm): I rise in the House to draw attention to the issue of funding for the RACQ NQ Rescue helicopter base in Mount Isa. This is a relatively new base. It was established in 2007 and received approval to be an accredited operation in the emergency network of Queensland in late 2011. That approval was granted by the previous government on the condition that they would not supply any state funding. So far they have raised all the money for their operations themselves, with generous sponsorship from RACQ and other mines in the area. They raise \$1.3 million a year but unfortunately have lost the sponsorship of Legend International, which has temporarily pulled out of the region. All they are seeking is a further \$200,000 to fully fund their service seven days a week. They have already proven that they can fund themselves for six days and five nights a week, and a bit of help from the government would ensure that they could employ another pilot to cover the region full time.

The Queensland government funds every other rescue helicopter service in the state except for this one, which, with a staff of five, covers almost a quarter of the state—over 500,000 kilometres. I would like to think that the government would see the unfairness of not funding this extremely vital rescue service that has saved many lives in the short time of operation. In their first 17 months of operation they have already saved 44 lives, with an average of one call-out per week. The charter of this essential not-for-profit charity is to provide a full-time dedicated community rescue helicopter service to the people of the north-west.

The RACQ NQ Rescue helicopter brings a 'flying hospital' to people in need—at the side of the road after a motor vehicle accident, at the workplace after an industrial action or particularly at a remote mine or in a remote area where a sick or injured person desperately needs to be airlifted to the specialised care and treatment of a hospital. Most recently, last week, it went up to the gulf to rescue a remote fisherman.

The service provided by the helicopter significantly enhances the existing services by offering a highly specialised emergency medical response service for the critically ill and injured. The RACQ NQ Rescue helicopter service works hand in hand with the Queensland Ambulance Service, with the aircraft permanently manned by intensive care flight paramedics. The service also works with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies. The helicopter not only offers highly specialised medical services but also assistance to local government in times of natural disasters. Seventy per cent of their workload is jobs—road accidents, station accidents, search and rescue. Although each mission carries a significant cost, the service is provided at no cost to the patient and is regarded as a boost for rural health, medical and emergency services in the region.

This is an essential service in the north-west, where road accidents, station accidents and even mining accidents can occur hundreds of kilometres from the nearest clinic or hospital. Since every other rescue helicopter service in the state is funded by the government, I can see no reason why the government cannot provide some funding to the RACQ North Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service.