



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2013

## ADJOURNMENT

### North-West Queensland, Drought Assistance; Garde, Councillor E

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (3.12 am): I would like to draw the attention of the House to the terrible state we find our cattle industry in in North Queensland and over most of Western Queensland at the moment. I draw the attention of members to the plight of a couple in Winton. They are on a stock route and they look like they have to move off. They have been out there for three months. They have probably about 1,000 head of their breeder herd left there. They said that if they are told to go off they will just leave the cattle there, because there is no feed left on their station and there is no agistment left for them. The cattle are not marketable and they are in no state to travel. So they will just leave them there, presumably to perish. They are in the hands of the council now. Their story is not an isolated one. There are a lot of people in that position. It is a diabolical position for many of those people to be in.

At the moment, the issue is not the drought. In 2010 the average debt level on farms around Australia was \$700,000. That debt level is now \$1.4 million and rising. In 2009 the MLA undertook a survey of beef producers in the northern cattle grazing industry. Back then, the return on their assets was 0.3 per cent to two per cent. They said that it was the worst conditions since the 1970s. That was before the live export ban. That was before significant rises in costs and deterioration in market conditions.

The industry is in a parlous state and needs a big effort to rescue it. The trapeze wire has been cut and it needs a safety net. It was a very commendable effort by the minister to open up the national parks. That saved about 40 graziers who are on those parks until 31 December. That is an issue that will have to be looked at if there is no rain in November. It will all be in vain if they have to get off the national parks in December and there is no rain. But we are very grateful for the position that the minister took with that matter. He has probably saved the livelihoods of at least 40 graziers. It was tremendous that he was able to do that.

In terms of a rescue package, I think most people out there would recognise that the ARDB—the Australian Reconstruction and Development Board—would be the best answer that everyone needs. In the past it used to act as a safety net—as a way of getting cheap finance to get people through these tough times. I think that needs to be looked at in the long run. Another issue that also needs to be considered is the declaration of this drought as a natural disaster.

I will use the time left to me to make mention of the passing of a very well-respected person, Councillor Eddie Garde from Croydon, who tragically crashed his plane with his son a couple of weeks ago. It is important that this House acknowledges the contribution he made in developing that area around Croydon in north-west Queensland. He will be sadly missed.