




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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**COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO.1) 2013:
DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT**

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (8.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the disallowance motion with respect to the proposed changes to the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011 and the Community Safety Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2013. These are reflective of a fundamental flaw in government policy, which fails to acknowledge or address the differences between urban and rural communities.

This issue had its genesis some months ago. We were sitting in parliament and were told of some proposed cutbacks to the Rural Fire Service. I listened to the Deputy Premier tell us how this was a good thing and say that he was preparing the ground for these changes to be made. There was a blow-up in the media and, to give credit where credit is due, the government stopped, had a think and sent the member for Mirani out to see what was going on and look at how to fix the situation. From all accounts he did a sterling job and has provided recommendations. The critical thing now is for those recommendations to be taken up. The feedback to me shows that there is a lot of anxiety on the part of a lot of the rural fires that this will not be rolled out in the way they want.

This is part of such a strong trend that we see all the time. When words such as 'consolidated revenue', 'centralisation' and 'competition' are used, it always ends badly for the bush. I put it in the context of schools in my area being closed. We were not supposed to have any schools closed. The Gregory school has been closed and the building taken away. Year 7 is being removed from primary schools in my area. The government talks about making things better for rural fires. They are told, 'Just give us the money and we will take care of it.' I am sorry if there is a bit of distrust there. Local authorities and local fire brigades should remain autonomous. That is what they want and that is what should be delivered to them—to run effectively and to know that every bit of energy that goes in and every bit of money that they raise, whether it be from the council or through volunteers, goes back into their service.

There seems to be a leaning towards these Keelty review recommendations, which will not be favourable and will not be taken up by members of these communities, by the 35,000 volunteers out there. I do not need to go over the importance of the services provided to these areas. I saw firsthand the damage that was done by the Bowthorn fires last season and by the gulf fires. The critical requirement for these services was painfully obvious. Those fires caused a hell of a lot of damage. Not only is any threat to that service a threat to lives and safety; fires burn valuable pasture in our area. We need that service operating as best they can. Any disincentive is certainly a step backwards.

The main issue from my perspective is the attitude of the government in terms of consolidated revenue. They say, 'Just trust us. We will take the money in and we will divvy it up evenly and you will get a better result.' That does not wash with me. They also say that there is no money and we have to find a better way to do things. As long as I see a big hole in the ground in William Street—with a \$675 million commitment to a new office building that we do not need—I will not accept that.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr KATTER: I take that interjection about the private sector. You can pay interest on a mortgage or you can pay rent. Do you need the building or not? Do you need the upgrade? Over 100,000 square metres of office space is coming online in Brisbane city offices, so do not tell me about the debt. If it is a question of expenses, I do not accept it; nor should anyone else. In light of that, this disallowance motion should be supported by any rural member of this House and anyone who sticks by rural fires.