



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 3 June 2014

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Australian Curriculum**

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (11.50 am): Recently, the impact of the national curriculum—or the C2C, Curriculum into the Classroom—in rural areas has again reared its ugly head. After almost two years of the rollout of this fast-tracked system, which was imposed on people in rural areas, its effects are no less disastrous on the lifestyles of families living in remote areas. Despite having so many flaws, in 2012 the education department suggested that the introduction of C2C not be delayed and it was introduced into the school of distance education. What has occurred since that curriculum was introduced is something that the education minister should be very worried about and one that he and his department should be spending sleepless nights on, working overtime, to try to resolve.

On the weekend in two different western towns that I visited two parents from cattle properties came to me, unprompted, expressing their deep concerns about the impact of these changes to the curriculum. To put their concerns into context, we have the drought and other things affecting these people, but the main thing that they want to raise with me is the impact of the national curriculum on their lifestyles. These people are clearly distressed. They get aggressive when talking to me, because this curriculum is impacting heavily on their lifestyles.

One teacher who I know has been involved with the School of the Air for over 20 years has described the impact of this curriculum as nothing short of diabolical. One parent observed that the numbers at the recent School of the Air sports day were down significantly and suggested that enrolment numbers may be down. I have now requested that information from the minister. That parent suggested that the reduced number could be due in part to the impact of the curriculum. It could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. It could make workers and other people living on remote properties make the decision to move in town. I should also acknowledge that the numbers at the sports day could be impacted by other components of the rural crisis.

One of the parents from a rural property who I spoke to on the weekend had made the decision to get a house in town and move the kids into town. So for five days a week she is away from her husband so that the kids could go to school in Richmond. I congratulate the principal of that school, Patrick Brady, who does a terrific job. This parent said that her children are now getting a good education. But she should not have to make that decision. She should not have to leave the station where she helps her husband survive on the land because of these curriculum changes that have been forced on her children.

These changes to the curriculum might have some good effects, but they were rolled out too fast and the assistance to help with the changes is not there. Something needs to be done to resolve the issues. Some of the impacts of C2C include kids not getting their materials on time or not receiving them at all. Much of the material that they did receive initially was substandard and parents

claimed that they had political agendas that were offensive to people living in rural areas. Parents had significant difficulties with downloading material. Lots of families had to extend their internet plans to cope with that and still they went well over their allocation. Evidently, no consideration was given to internet connectivity in the bush. Parents found the material in the C2C framework difficult to modify to different levels of learning ability. There were technological difficulties with miStick. It was unreliable and, in many cases, just did not work. That difficulty clearly increased the frustration of parents who are trying to be teachers and tutors. Many gave up and asked for hard copies of the program, which they were not supposed to receive. The C2C programs on literacy were deemed by almost every parent on a ICPA teleconference to be insufficient.

Currently, federally there is a review of this curriculum, but it is not moving fast enough. Everything needs to be changed as soon as possible—I would say immediately. The curriculum needs to be more adaptable and flexible. One parent, who was a teacher herself, said that her daughter failed year 7 science because she was learning the year 10 science course that her older daughter had learned a few years ago. That child now says, 'Science is just not my thing.' That parent said that the curriculum is seriously flawed and, in many cases, is a failed attempt at social engineering, because it does not always tell both sides of the story.

It must also be considered that the emotional stress that these curriculum changes is causing these families is coming at a time when a lot of them do not need it. For people who live on these cattle properties, they are facing too many issues already. The changes in the curriculum are a jump to a standard that is far too high and has occurred far too quickly for a lot of these kids. It is causing these kids to either become disillusioned or walk away from their schooling altogether.

This is a cry for help from parents to address this issue. Clearly, they are very distressed. The education department's website pledges to deliver world-class education to people at every stage of their personal and professional development. The delivery of that standard of education must include being delivered to these kids in remote areas. They cannot be forgotten. Many parents in remote areas are working very hard so that their kids can get off the land or get out of the situation that they find themselves in. They might be a fencing contractor up in the gulf who does not have the internet connectivity for their kids to learn the curriculum. They are having all of these problems and their poor kid is walking away from school. They want to give their kid an education so that they can get their kid off the land, but that education is not being made available because of the failures of this system. This issue needs to be addressed. The curriculum is having a disastrous effect on people's lifestyles in the bush. I plead for the minister to act on it.

*(Time expired)*