



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 6 August 2014

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

### **State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee, Report**

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (4.42 pm): I found the estimates committee to be very well conducted. I would be very surprised if the chair of any estimates committee conducted the committee in a more bipartisan way than our chair did. We were given a very good run and a very good opportunity to ask questions. I have to give the minister credit for attempting to address any question we fielded so I am appreciative of that. Some of the answers I found very dissatisfactory and they are the ones I would like to focus on now.

The first one was with the Deputy Premier on the Hann Highway. Of particular interest to me is the section of the inland highway which is the Hann Highway. The whole impetus for an alternative to the Bruce Highway is to get away from the flood effects. The point I made in my question to the Deputy Premier is if you are going to have an inland highway and want to get away from the flooding effects, you have to go as far west as the Hann Highway because everything else will incur the high rainfall river systems that influence east of the great divide. His response was that it is too far west. That is the whole point of going down the Hann Highway. It is a pointless exercise unless you are willing to acknowledge that fact. It is a very important point, talking about the inland highway, and that point needs to be addressed.

We talked about strategies for developing alternative energy supplies in North Queensland. It is a very difficult subject; I acknowledge that. There are no easy answers but there have to be some answers. Unless you want to kiss goodbye to any future development in the North West Minerals Province, there needs to be a solution. Some of the solutions I acknowledge would be very tough, but that is why we mention things like gas reservation policies. That could be limited to new developments in new areas or perhaps it needs some tweaking. But we have councils that are celebrating the gas finds in their district because they think they will get access to cheap gas, and that is ridiculous. They will not get access to it because it will all be sold overseas. We are 100 per cent reliant on gas fired power in the North West Minerals Province. It is going to be very hard for any government to reconcile the impetus for northern development with the fact that in the North West Minerals Province we are 100 per cent reliant on gas fired energy which is set to go up by a factor of three or four.

I asked about the progress of the implementation group for the 50-year freight strategy. In my opinion that has flatlined ever since it was rolled out. With the commercial challenges and the people it is trying to confront, the objective it set out to do is not being met at all. That is something that needs to be addressed.

A question that also came up in that session was FIFO. I do not think that issue has been addressed. It is particularly relevant in my area, but I think it is just as disastrous to communities and the social fabric of areas like Collinsville and Moranbah. I completely acknowledge the challenges there. We do want mining development and we want to attract investment there, but it cannot come at such a great cost. One of the responses is it is about giving people a choice. I disagree. There has to

be some leadership shown by the government. It was always the case in Mount Isa that, if you want a job, you go out there and you work out there. Unless you do that, unless there is some leadership shown by government at all levels, it will happen, it will grow and it will destroy western communities, as it is doing now.

We spoke about Royalties for the Regions, which is a very big issue for me. That program and the announcement by the government of that program raised a lot of hope to people in my area and the government received a lot of kudos, but it has been a continual disappointment, particularly in my region and in Gladstone. Whether it has been thrown around for political purposes or not, it simply does not deliver. Mount Isa received \$500,000 and Blakey's Crossing in Townsville received \$21 million. I think that sums up the effectiveness of that program.

The energy minister touched on the gas reservation policy. I was quite pleased with the response he gave on the equalisation rate and CSO being maintained for regional areas, which is very important to us. I thought it was a very dissatisfactory response to the Mount Isa water issues because we are paying a very big price—

*(Time expired)*