




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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ADJOURNMENT

Etheridge Shire Council

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (12.20 am): I rise to talk about the plight of remote and regional councils in North-West Queensland. The councils of this great state are, in my opinion, the backbone and most productive part of not only Queensland but also the entire country. These councils are facing some of the toughest challenges since Queensland was established. I attended a roads forum on Friday at which it was stated—it is nothing new—that road funding in the region will go from \$100 million to \$30 million for the next three years. It will be a big struggle for those councils because doing that work with that funding is what keeps them viable.

Not only are councils struggling to overcome the challenges of Mother Nature with the most devastating droughts in history; they are also facing the challenge of an ever-dwindling share of the vast revenues that they raise for the government. These stalwarts of the Australian economy generate the lion's share of GDP for this great state yet they receive the lowest share per square kilometre of the funds that they raise for the benefit of Queenslanders.

The Etheridge Shire Council is an example of one of our proud, great councils in the north-west. It is approximately 4½ hours west of Cairns. Today, about 40 per cent of houses in the Etheridge shire are for sale or vacant. Families are leaving town and the community cannot afford to lose even one person. I am informing the House that they need help from the government and they need help from every department—the help of developing opportunities for key economic development projects in the shire to come to fruition, and help to have the most basic services provided such as nursing, a reliable telephone and internet service, safe roads and, most importantly, clean, safe water. I table a picture depicting the water that residents of this great shire, which is home to some of the hardest working people in our state, are putting up with. No-one anywhere in Australia would find that acceptable. The picture shows their town water at the moment.

Tabled paper: Photographs of unclean water in council areas in the Mount Isa electorate [\[5895\]](#).

The last time I raised the issue of the water supply in Georgetown the minister responded that it was the responsibility of the council and no responsibility of his. I disagree. There is a problem with water at the moment. The council does not have the capacity to cover it. They have been a very frugal shire. They have not spent on any big projects with bells or whistles in the town. They operate on a shoestring budget. The shire is very well run by the mayor there, Will Attwood, and Councillor Warren Bethel. They do a great job of running that council. They have the proposal for the Charleston Dam that is sitting there. That can help unlock growth in that region. There are big projects ahead for that region with IFED and others. There is great potential there.

They need something done about the water supply. I think everyone in this House would agree that that is unacceptable to anyone in Queensland. That issue alone does not need a dam; it just requires assistance with the chlorination plant. I will be meeting with the minister and will put to him that he should step in and help these people. I would not wash in that water. I do not think anyone else in this room would. It is not acceptable and it needs to be fixed.