




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (3.44 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. There are a couple of points of the bill that I want to focus on. The first is in relation to flying fox risk management. It is always pleasing to see some progress being made in terms of dealing with flying foxes. It was an issue that was paramount when I was on the Mount Isa City Council, so I am acutely aware of many of the issues council face in dealing with it. There has been progress in developing that, but unfortunately when I was on council there was so much misinformation provided in terms of how we deal with that. For instance, the comment was made when I was on the council that culling or reducing the numbers was not an issue because we could not compromise the number of flying foxes in any particular colony, but then a comment was made further in that discussion that nature has a wonderful way of replenishing itself and building up strong numbers in a very fast period. That to me was fairly contradictory to the first point made.

The other point that gets lost with flying fox management in those remote areas is the fact that Mount Isa has only been there since the 1920s and it is a completely unnatural environment and the only other similar type environment for roosting of that size is about 500 kilometres away on the coast. It is certainly a very unnatural environment and habitat that has been created for them there. It has created a big problem and these are small steps towards managing it, but they do help. I give credit to the minister for improving that situation. This issue has come to the fore again with the debate on ebola in that we have become acutely aware of these diseases and the threat that they pose. We just heard from the member for Whitsunday about the deaths that have occurred from this issue, so it is very serious and needs to be dealt with. This is only the start of the journey. There is a lot more to be done with regard to the management of them, but I do appreciate that at least there have been small steps made in that regard. I commend the minister for that.

The other issue I want to address in this bill relates to Great Barrier Reef protection. I am all for it given that I have the port of Karumba in my electorate. Karumba is a little place that bats well above its weight in terms of the local economy. Compared to other western towns in my electorate in terms of economic output, it leaves them for dead. It has a massive fishing industry and a large portion of the mining industry. Century Zinc, one of the world's largest zinc mines, sends all of its concentrate through to Karumba. It has a live cattle export facility. It has huge tourism capacity in that the population swells from 600 people to about 3,500 in the tourist season during the winter months. It is also a fishing mecca for everyone who lives in North Queensland, so it is a great place.

At the moment the port requires dredging. It is a very shallow port. It is not a big port, but it is of enormous strategic value because boats can go straight through to Asia, bypassing the Great Barrier Reef. It is a very important point to recognise that Karumba is an access port for produce out of North-West Queensland and the gulf that can go direct to Asia, bypassing the reef. I am told that

Panamax ships are the class of ship that seafarers like to use now in those industries. Panamax ships can get into that port, but we do not like those ships going across the reef.

There is great potential, and that has been acknowledged in the bill. We need to protect the reef and that lends a large focus on the port in Karumba. Mayor Fred Pascoe does a great job in promoting that. I also acknowledge the efforts the Premier made in dealing with Fred Pascoe to get control of Karumba port, and they have been doing some work towards that end. Once Century Zinc reduces its operations and all but shuts down next year, they will not be feeding a lot of money into that port for dredging so it will need some work. If we want to protect the Great Barrier Reef, we have to look at the Karumba port. It can offer a lot of benefit to the development of North-West Queensland.

I appreciate those aspects of the bill. I think both of them have benefits to my electorate. I am very supportive of those aspects of the bill and I thank the minister.