




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

Queensland Rail, The Inlander

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (3.55 pm): I rise to speak about the Inlander train service which is currently under threat. The Inlander is a passenger train completing two return journeys between Townsville and Mount Isa weekly. It will celebrate its 62nd year in February 2015. The Inlander is one of only three modes of public transport offered to residents along the north-western line from Townsville to Mount Isa—those who live in Cloncurry, Julia Creek, Richmond and Hughenden—but one of only two offered to residents at Torrens Creek, Pentland and Duchess.

In the south-east, people are afforded options—City Rail, long-distance rail services, the Gold Coast trams, the TransLink bus services, domestic flights, the TransLink CityCats, cruise liners, taxis and limousines. There are many more modes of transport offered in Brisbane—which is understandable and it is a good thing—but we have very limited modes of transport out in these areas and they are vital if any are removed.

Total payment to Queensland Rail by government in 2012-13 was \$1.75 billion. It costs the government approximately \$12.5 million a year to cover the subsidy of the Inlander, and I think it is \$110 million a year for the subsidy on passenger rail in Brisbane. The subsidy on the Inlander is less than one per cent—it is 0.71 per cent—of the total amount paid by the state government to Queensland Rail annually. There has been a 61 per cent increase in the subsidy by the government for some public transport services in the south-east since 2008-09, and it is believed that this will increase a further 35 per cent by 2015-16. Yet the government is unwilling to commit a minute slice of funding to continue this Inlander service.

A lot of people out there have helped to build this state. They have lived out there in that heat and under those conditions. Yes, they have chosen to live out there, but they deserve some rights for doing that. These people have helped to build this state. They choose to live out there but they should be afforded some rights. This is a small sum. It is why the government is here—to be able to deliver those sorts of services to people in need. It is not used a lot—the usage is not great—but those people who do use it critically rely on it. They are older people and low-income workers. I have used it a few times myself and it is a good service. A lot of work can be done, and I am happy to work with the minister and the government to improve on that service. There are some tweakings that can be done right now.

We have the minister saying he wants to improve public transport, he is going to increase the off-peak frequency of public transport in Brisbane and he is going to increase the services in Brisbane to make more people use them. But at the same time in Mount Isa they are saying that if fewer people are using it then the service should just be removed altogether. This service has been there for 63 years, but they just want to remove it because it is down in numbers a bit. People who use that service deserve it. It is a right that people have in those western areas. We need to protect them. It is a vital service that must remain.

(Time expired)