




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Record of Proceedings, 6 May 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Laura Johnson Home; Water Industry, Dividends

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (10.00 pm): I rise tonight to speak about water charges in Mount Isa and about the dividend that is no longer being returned to the people of Mount Isa. First I will talk about the Laura Johnson Home, which has just received an \$18 million extension. It was interesting to hear the story of how that home was first built by the people of Mount Isa. In the 1970s, an initiative of the AWU at the time saw a portion of people's wages being given to build an old people's home in Mount Isa. It was fully paid for by the people of Mount Isa. That is the way things have worked out there: a lot of people have just dug into their own pockets to build their own infrastructure.

Lake Moondarra was 100 per cent built and paid for by Mount Isa Mines along with the townspeople. Approximately 50 per cent of our other water storage, Lake Julius, was also paid for by Mount Isa Mines. The Mount Isa Water Board was the custodian of that resource and operated from the back of a small arcade from 1973 to 1989. Everything was commercialised in 2000, and from 2000 to 2011-12 all dividends and taxes made from the Mount Isa Water Board were passed by the state government back to the Mount Isa City Council. In the last four years, to 2014, that ranged from a million dollars a year—it was always above a million dollars a year—up to \$2,670,000 a year. That sum is very significant to the town of Mount Isa and the Mount Isa City Council. It is a vital amount of money that comes back to help them.

We have borne enormous costs associated with an outbreak of blue-green algae which, had it occurred in any large metropolitan area, would have been called a disaster and attracted funding immediately. The cell count in the water went from some 100,000 to five million. It led to an impost of \$250,000 a month on the people of Mount Isa. Now we have an \$9.2 million water filtration system—again, all paid for by the people of Mount Isa with no help from anyone.

Now the government has taken the dividend off us, as of last year. This coming year 100 per cent of the dividend will be taken off us. It is unfair for the people of Mount Isa. We are paying for our own things most of the time. The dam was built for and by Mount Isa Mines, and now the people of Mount Isa are putting a million dollars a year back into state coffers. This represents a tax on us and it is unfair. The situation needs to be changed. This measure was instituted by the last government but it needs to be changed now. I will not stop talking about this issue. My campaign will not end until something is changed. I believe that a similar problem exists for the member for Gladstone.

These things are not there to make a profit from. Since the venture has been commercialised it has made a profit of between \$4 million and \$5 million a year. A portion of that is a dividend that must be returned, post haste, to the people of Mount Isa.