




Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2015

**MOTION: SELECT COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEBT AND DROUGHT**

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amended motion put forward by the government on this issue. I believe that rural debt, not so much drought, is the big issue facing agriculture out there at the moment. I think the debate gets a little bit hijacked by things that have exacerbated what I would describe as a rural crisis that we have on our hands affecting agriculture. In the four years that I have been here, I can say that it is certainly nothing new to this parliament. I think the arguments against timing pale into insignificance when we reflect on the fact that this issue has not sprung out of nowhere; it has been here for a long time. I think what we are after here is expediency—something that moves swiftly.

I appreciate the virtues of the opposition's motion in that there is some teeth in having a parliamentary committee. I have discussed that matter with the opposition leader. There is some merit to that approach. An issue that I have is that, from my experience in going to departmental briefings and having agricultural lobby groups, when you talk about assistance, intervention—anything like that—that is so far from the consciousness or the acceptability to most of these groups that are out there. To be honest, over the past four years as a state member it makes me sick to listen to people who tell me that the assistance is good, the packages are right and trying to ground truth that to the situation that I see on the ground.

We have a huge problem and the usual suspects have failed to address that problem. To me, going through the usual channels is not something that I am inclined to waste my time on. If it means that we are seeing the same people in the same room to address this problem that has been here for a lot longer than the last 20 days, then I think that I am probably wasting my time and probably this parliament would be wasting its time as well.

The solutions that have been put forward by governments of both persuasions are not doing the job. That is why the problem has become exacerbated. Most people in my electorate would get angry with you if you started talking about the drought assistance and how it has helped them. It is inaccessible out there. Most people out there would say that it is inaccessible to those who need it and accessible to those who do not need it and there is a small wedge in between who may get some benefit from it.

Since this task force was announced, people from lobby groups—a lot of names—have spoken openly against the things that I have been trying to push for, such as a rural reconstruction board and multiperil insurance. People who want to be on the task force or on whatever body is set up to address the problem have been speaking against that.

What is the point in having the same people who have ignored the problem, ignored any of these solutions, as part of the process? They demand to be part of this process to fix it. They have not done their job. That is why we are still here talking about it. People are in trouble out there and are not being helped because the problem is being ignored. I want to be part of the process that helps fix this. It is not going to be all for everyone and it will not be a free-for-all for a lot of these people who have hung

around these groups lately and pushed their ideology of no government intervention at all. 'We cannot have people interfering in the market.' Well, it is needed right now or there will be a widespread collapse across agriculture and the western grazing industry. If you fail to acknowledge that then you really do not understand what is going on out there and you should educate yourself on it.

I am part of this task force; I am the chair. I do not want to see the usual suspects at these hearings pushing their views that have led us to the situation we are in. That is why I will not be supporting the motion tonight. The ability is there with the people to make this happen. It would be a wonderful thing if we can do this with both sides of the parliament. I think there are some good people who can make this happen and I hope that it does.