




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Outback Queensland, Unemployment

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (2.58 am): I would like to indulge in presenting a few statistics tonight—some that are very startling. It behoves the entire parliament to acknowledge them. The first statistic is the labour force unemployment rates for the regions for the December quarter. For the Queensland outback, and I will table this graph, it is 15.1 per cent, which is approximately three times the state average and almost double the next nearest.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Queensland—Unemployment rate by Labour Force Region' [[184](#)].

I have a great deal of empathy for places like Mackay, Townsville and Cairns that are doing it tough, but their figures are nearly half the figure for the Queensland outback. I would like to think that I, as a resident of the outback, would be deeply concerned if those figures were reversed and Brisbane were facing those figures. My observation is that all my friends and relatives in Brisbane do quite well.

Everyone I know in the outback, everyone I know in my home town is struggling. It is deeply concerning to me. It is no coincidence. It is not just that we are experiencing poor market conditions in the mining industry or the beef cattle industry, which is true, this has resulted from the neglect of successive governments in terms of infrastructure and policy.

Another figure I would like to share with the parliament is that the gross regional product for someone who lives in the north-west is over \$180,000 per person. For someone who lives in the south-east it is \$60,000 per person. We are an area of great productivity. We are great contributors to the state. Mount Isa Mines was voted the most productive and the most significant in business in Queensland's 150-year history at the Q150 celebrations.

Approximately \$300 million a year in royalties alone come out of just the north-west, yet we have a degraded rail line. Anyone who knows the rail line well knows that it has been neglected. We have depleted water resources. We did not build a transmission line. I was talking to one of our major mines in the region the other day and they paid three times what one of their other mines in New South Wales paid for their energy. These things relate to the cities.

A large number of our workforce are FIFO employees from places like Townsville and Brisbane. We all suffer the consequences if we do not invest in these areas. They need attention. They have been neglected. The problem is that there are no votes out there so we always get lost in the mix. Under that 15.1 per cent unemployment is a lot of loss, a lot of hardship and despair. I think that is something that every Queenslanders should be frightfully aware of. We should be ashamed that we have let it get to that and it needs to be repaired.