




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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MOTION: VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.22 pm): This motion is really about trying to stop any changes to vegetation management. That is what we are arguing about here tonight. I think there is a strong consensus about that here tonight. We have tried to do that in a constructive way for North Queensland, focusing on the lack of development in the north and how to facilitate further development.

Mr Seeneey: What about my constituents, Robbie?

Mr KATTER: Member for Callide, I am happy to consider the people in your electorate. Let us have a constructive conversation about this. The member for Hinchinbrook wants to play politics with this—

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr KATTER: We are happy to talk to him. We can look at any amendment, decide whether it makes things better and, if so, vote for it. We are not going to argue and play games about it. We are happy to do something productive.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr KATTER: We are happy to include it. We are happy to listen to the member for Hinchinbrook. That is how it should work, but the member for Hinchinbrook wants to play games with this issue.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Opposition members interjected.

Mr KATTER: We want to combine to stop changes to vegetation management—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mount Isa, resume your seat. You know the procedures of this chamber. You have been here long enough. Member for Hinchinbrook, you do as well. That is inappropriate. If you have something to say, you know how to express it. This is not an opportunity for a debate across the chamber.

Mr KATTER: We have had discussions with the Leader of the Opposition, who has made some good points. We are happy to consider those.

I will talk about some of the issues. The point is that development is being stifled all across the state. Nowhere is that more evident than in the north. Some terrific ground has been made in the north with the changes made a couple of years ago. There is a wonderful example of this up in the gulf, near Croydon. Thousands of hectares have been cleared, but it is merely a speck on the map that is barely discernible on these places. I think there are a lot of members who think that once you allow 10 per cent clearing of a place there will be a free-for-all. Whilst there is economic benefit in it, people are not going to jump at this or start clearing trees tomorrow. At best, we will end up with a patchwork or mosaic of clearing activities that enhance the productivity of these stations.

As much as we try to develop, if you allow for 10 per cent it will end up being only two per cent over the bioregion. On some stations you do not have the country or the ability or it just does not work with the style of that station or the production system of that station. Quite often, only a very small portion is viable to clear. I think people have images of big, significant portions being cleared in the north.

The point we are trying to make with this motion is that throughout Queensland's history a lot of Queenslanders had a long time to develop, but the north is in its infancy in terms of development. There needs to be special recognition of the fact that the state was developed. We have made a lot of money and there has been enhanced productivity in many other areas of the state—the Brigalow belt and places like that—because they were allowed to develop in a political climate that did not have the influence of the Greens. Now we are looking at the north.

We can deliver great things to the state with very limited impact on the bioregion. You will never exceed what is considered an acceptable impact tolerance of, say, 10 per cent on those bioregions. Science says that bioregions will tolerate 10 per cent clearing, but with the 10 per cent we are advocating you would be hard-pressed to reach three per cent. In terms of reef run-off, tree cover versus grass cover and so on, the science is out. There are actually some great benefits that would come from that small amount of clearing.

A lot of people in the chamber who have opinions on this will rarely set foot on that country in their lifetime, if at all. People need to understand the enormous size of these places. They are denying the opportunity to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to develop this land.

We thought it was a good concept to focus on an area of Australia that is largely undeveloped. That is not to exclude other areas of the state. We will be happy to consider amendments because the main message that we would like to get agreement on is that there should not be changes as there are other ways to advance the productivity of the state without impacting on the environmental virtues that we all care about. I think it is a very reasonable proposition. We hope that the House supports it.