



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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ADJOURNMENT

Mount Isa Electorate, Airfares

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (10.57 pm): Last year I tabled a petition from local Mount Isa woman Donna Sharpe which was delivered to Qantas, Virgin and Queensland airports protesting against the cost of flights from Mount Isa. It received 6,798 signatures. A Facebook post by Kyle Keighery which set off another media storm on the same subject now has 7,551 'likes'—bearing in mind there are only about 19,000 people living in Mount Isa.

Service providers have said that we should book in advance and that is the way to get cheap flights. Unfortunately, a lot of the time those fares have already been booked by transient FIFO employees, so the mums and dads who are trying to visit their families and vice versa cannot access any of those cheaper fares, if they do exist, and many miss out. Virgin came to Mount Isa in 2012 and it was thought that would add competition, but it did very little to the price of airfares. It exacerbates the disconnect we feel from family members and friends who live on the coast, and it deters family and friends from visiting us in return.

I would say that the cost of airfares is the biggest issue for the people of Mount Isa. Every week or two I am approached by people who are concerned about this issue and how much it imposes on them. Not to mention that the service has been downgraded to a Qantas Link service, which still has large volumes on their planes. I would like to share with the House a few contributions from people who have written to my office. One of my constituents says—

My sister wants to visit me for my 40th for the weekend and the cost to fly is \$1,800.

Another one states—

2 adults, 2 children to fly from Mt Isa to Brisbane return \$2,992—we decided to drive to Townsville and fly from there (not with Qantas or Virgin) and saving ourselves over \$2k.

Another one states—

We never have great specials—lowest I have ever seen it is \$250 ...

I have never got one that low in my life. Another one states—

\$930 Townsville to Bali return—flying from Mt Isa to Townsville \$1,000 extra.

Another comment was—

My brother passed away unexpectedly and the last minute flight for 2 adults and 2 children to fly back home had me applying for a bank loan.

Applying for a bank loan to fly to a funeral! Another states—

For my son, daughter in law, one child (4 years old), a second child (5 years old) to fly to Brisbane and return to Isa it's about \$2,880 or more, depending when you book but that's a minimum cost.

Qantas has the motto 'spirit of Australia'. Unfortunately, that does not seem to apply to us. Qantas's CEO, Alan Joyce, was reported in the paper to be receiving \$13 million by way of annual salary and Qantas has made \$1.53 billion in profit. Qantas was started in Winton and Cloncurry as a service to provide connectivity between people and the coast. It does not do that anymore.