



Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2016

MOTION

North Queensland, Secession

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.07 pm): I move—

That this House supports, in accordance with section 124 of the Commonwealth Constitution, the separation of Queensland into two states, and that the boundary of the two states is to be as recommended by an independent body, such as the current Queensland Redistribution Commission.

This is an interesting subject, and I think it is very difficult for people to comprehend such a significant change. When the colony was formed 150 years ago some boundaries were drawn up, and I do not think for a second that the people who drew up those boundaries thought they should be there ad infinitum and never be challenged. Section 124 of the Constitution states—

A new State may be formed by separation of territory from a State, but only with the consent of the Parliament thereof ...

They did that for a good reason. In the post-Federation period there have been several petitions calling for areas of existing states and the Northern Territory to become a new state in the Federation. The United States has recognised this and they have created some 20 new states since 1859, but we have not done this at all. We have therefore missed out on the advantages of efficiencies that can be achieved as a result of this. North and western Queensland are underrepresented and are not achieving their full potential. We now have only one senator left from North Queensland, but there are 12 from Tasmania representing a smaller population and a significantly smaller gross domestic product, so we have short-changed ourselves in terms of representation.

The population decline in rural and western areas is very evident and can be supported empirically. One reason for that is there is usually a deficit of funding and policy in those areas by the existing representation, so that is a self-manifesting problem that we as Queenslanders and Australians need to address. Geoffrey Blainey stated that, 'Australia has created no new states since 1859. The United States, in contrast, has created close to 20. For a land of this size we do not have enough states and thus miss out on the advantages of federalism.'

I put it to you that those are wise words, Mr Speaker. Many one-size-fits-all laws are made in this place and I would be the first to admit that many of them are very constructive and good for South-East Queensland and the larger metropolitan areas, but they do not work in regional areas. Housing codes and vegetation management codes, for example, had a far bigger impact when they were rolled out in western and northern areas. The year 7 transition was probably a good idea for Brisbane and metropolitan areas, but in rural and remote areas where there are no high schools many young people may have missed out on the opportunity to ever attend school again. I think policies are just rolled out with no consideration of their impact in those areas.

I think these things are done with the best intentions. I am not having a go at this government or previous governments and saying they are not thinking of things. These consequences arise despite the best intentions. We do not have the numbers in parliament, and the one-size-fits-all approach to legislation ends up impacting on us. Try as we may to make the application of the legislation more flexible, it just does not happen. The evidence is there.

Mount Isa Mines was voted the most significant business in Queensland's 150-year history because the wealth generated by that business grew the state. It is perverse that that rail line is now performing a lot more poorly than 40 or 50 years ago, yet we are still creating \$300 million a year in royalties.

This can be done. It is estimated that it would cost \$8 billion to \$10 billion a year to run the new state. We would be getting up to \$4 billion to \$5 billion a year in royalties and we would be getting GST revenue of \$2 billion to \$3 billion. It can be done and we need it to happen.

In the same way that separate National Rugby League teams in the north and the south—the Cowboys and the Broncos—has led to the State of Origin dominance of Queensland through better competition and better efficiency and we have invigorated both parts of the state to make a strong Queensland team, this can be done with the north and south of the state. If you empower people to make these decisions, we can make better decisions and power up the economy in that sector of the state. We are all Australians; we are all Queenslanders. We all want to grow the country; we all want to grow the state. There is a better way to do it. We should be challenging this in a debate in this place. I would like to hear more from people. We might be small in number but we can offer a lot to this country and this state. It is a serious debate. Go the Cowboys!