




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Mount Isa Electorate, Telecommunications

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (2.43 pm): I have watched with some curiosity the fuss that has been made in the media about the rail issues in Brisbane. On inquiry I learned that people were waiting 10 to 15 minutes for a train. Just prior to that time I had spent a couple of days with Helen Gluer and the minister. I was very interested that people were so worried about a 10- to 15-minute wait for a train when at the same time the people of Burketown and Gregory have been without phones for nine days. I know that this is a federal issue, but that issue should be everyone's concern. It is pretty upsetting and agitating for people in those communities to see on the front page of our newspapers that people are waiting 10 or 15 minutes for a train when they have been without phones for nine days. Annie Clarke, the former mayor of Burketown, has been sitting at the remote cattle station Brinawa Station by herself without a phone. I am being contacted via Facebook by people who are trying to get some action up there.

In order to provide some perspective, a couple of years ago the Inlander just failed to turn up for a CWA conference. People were told that they should make their own way on buses or in cars. No-one seems to worry about that. No-one seems to worry when people are stranded on Mornington Island for four weeks because the airport is not operating. That does not make the front page of the paper. No-one seems to be worried about that; they are worried about 10- or 15-minute delays.

In terms of issues with telecommunications in Karumba, we regularly get calls from Yvonne Tunney at Ash's fish and chip shop. In peak season, when she has 20 or 30 tourists lining up at the counter, EFTPOS may be down for the whole day so she has to conduct manual transactions. If we are serious about trying to promote and develop businesses in the north, we need to give as much consideration to the issues I have raised as we give to some travel inconvenience here. If I am in Brisbane I have the CityCat, buses and an extensive taxi service. I think a delay of 10 or 15 minutes on the rail network pales into insignificance when people are being left without phones for nine days. Telstra has something to answer for. Again, I know that this is a federal issue but everyone here should be aware of the difficulties faced by people.

I refer to the introduction of the national curriculum. The issues with telecommunications have affected schools also. Things come through on the phone. The satellite technology has not been what was expected. Either kids cannot download information from the internet because it is faulty or they have no phone to talk to their teachers. These are big problems.

(Time expired)