




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Rural Queensland, Education

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.57 pm): As of 2015 year 7 became the first grade in high school in Queensland. This negatively impacted rural Queensland. I do not think people realised the impact this would have. This was a result of a policy that was initially fed down from the federal parliament. It trickled out through Queensland. Our rural towns were forgotten. For places like Camooweal, Doomadgee, Boulia, Georgetown and Julia Creek in my electorate that do not have high schools it placed an excessive burden on parents who have to send their kids away to boarding school a year earlier.

This is enormous cost for families. This forced families to leave the local schools earlier. It resulted in fewer teacher numbers in our schools. The schools became less variable. Some councils were very good. McKinlay and Georgetown manoeuvred and funded them themselves. I think it is a pretty perverse outcome that councils are funding education in Queensland. We have teacher aides delivering school of the air curriculum in those classrooms. The kids are still doing the same work in those classrooms to keep them in town a while longer. The council is funding that themselves and parents pay a fee. It makes it harder when the numbers are down for a year.

This results in excessive pressure on those kids. In terms of the school of the air kids, a figure given to me not so long ago was that the number of kids accessing the living away from home allowance over the last 10 years has gone from 2,000 to 900. That gives a picture of what is happening to our towns and our young people out in those areas. We are losing a lot of them. Those who are out there we want to give the best chance we can in terms of their education.

A lot of these towns have a high Indigenous population. It is very important to try to keep those kids in school. A lot of them fall off the wagon if we cannot keep them in school. Years 6, 7, 8 and 9 are critical. Removing year 7 from those towns has created a large burden.

I am pleased that the government has come to their assistance finally after that change with some commitments in some of these towns—Georgetown, Karumba and possibly McKinlay, where there is a teacher aide helping those kids and keeping those kids in school. I commend those councils for making the effort to try to do something for the parents and kids in those towns, taking matters into their own hands when they were left out in the cold like that.

I would like to make the House aware that there is an additional burden on those people in those areas. If things are not tough enough, they are still battling with that issue. Councils are picking up the slack. Finally, there is some assistance from the state that we are very appreciative of. I hope that can continue into the future.