




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Flinders Highway

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (2.48 pm): For the second sitting in a row I rise to bring an issue to the attention of the House. No-one down here seems to be interested in this issue because they are all obsessed with train timetables, but we are experiencing train problems from Mount Isa to Townsville. It is everyone's problem all the way from Mount Isa to Townsville. It is completely dysfunctional and needs the very serious attention of the government. At present we are facing 30 road trains per day—they were not there before—but these triple road trains are now going past my office right through the middle of town getting on to the Flinders Highway. They are carting material or intermodal material that used to go on the rail line and create revenue for the government, but it is now being moved by road.

This is a huge problem presenting safety issues to drivers on that road. It is mostly a dual-lane road that for long sections, particularly from Julia Creek to Hughenden, is poorly maintained. Another 10,000 road trains a year are going to be put on the highway from Mount Isa to Townsville. Currently, there is talk of an eastern access corridor into the port at Townsville. There is no point in having that corridor if there are no trains to feed into the port. The government has to fix this.

Based on the 2015-16 figures alone, in the north-west, just out of the mining industry, there is \$1.7 billion to the state, or \$310 million in royalties, none of which are returned to the area. That is going to be compromised if the area does not have affordable transport and the system does not work. Historically, the rule of thumb was that it cost between \$90 and \$100 a tonne to transport goods by road from Mount Isa to Townsville and about \$60 a tonne by rail. Historically, road transport was always expensive, but I believe that road transport operators have sharpened their pencils and are ripping the hell out of the roads now. Taxpayers are going to have to pay to fix that road when we have a perfectly good rail line.

The CEO of Aurizon was on over \$6 million a year, but Aurizon still cut 60 jobs and has given away hundreds of thousands of tonnes, because it is just not interested in the business. That business is still there. Glencore, Incitec, Pivot and Sun Metals zinc are also responsible, because they are all putting goods on the roads. Queensland Rail and the government are also responsible. They are a very big stakeholder, as is Aurizon. There are three parties that need to sort out the situation.

I do not want to see deaths on the road. I do not want to come back into this place after there has been a death on the road caused by someone trying to overtake a triple road train. I do not want to see tourist numbers down throughout the north-west into the Northern Territory because tourists are scared to drive along the road because of these road trains. There is plenty of capacity on the rail line. The ore should be placed back on the rail and off the road.