




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Rural and Remote Schools

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.12 pm): I rise tonight to congratulate the work done by some of our rural schools. I had the pleasure of visiting Urandangi State School, which is in a very remote part of Queensland, and meeting with Principal Lewis Parker and about eight kids from the school. It was a fantastic experience. The job they do out there is magnificent. I met with Chris Ford, the Principal of Burketown State School, and saw the tremendous results that he has achieved over the last two years. We are very grateful to the government which provided the sum total of almost \$2 million to subsidise an optic fibre cable that has helped with their schooling.

In visiting up there it became apparent that these schools fluctuate in their numbers. They are very small numbers. Once you go below about 23 students you start losing extra teacher numbers. Numbers go up and fluctuate during the year. It is very hard for these schools to hold good staff because they need a little more flexibility and latitude. We have had discussions with the minister. I spoke with the ICPA president, Kim Hughes, and Kate Twist under her the other day pursuing the same thing. It is something we really need to do to help all of these remote schools. We need to give them some flexibility and some longer term contracts for teachers who commit to going out there. They are doing a wonderful job with our students in remote areas. It is a way that we can support them. I hope that we are able to achieve that in this House.

The other issue I would like to make the House aware of is that Dugald River announced its plan this week to make a base in Townsville. That is terrific, but the big issue is: where is Dugald River going to put its ore? Are they going to cart their ore along the Flinders Highway and rip it up some more, or are they going to put it on rail? The federal budget talked about inland rail and a railway from Melbourne to here. There is no point building these rail lines if we have not set the pricing and policies around it that will entice people to use the asset itself.

We have this wonderful asset—the Mount Isa to Townsville rail line. The problem is not limited to just MIM and Aurizon, whose contract fell over. There are a lot of other users who should be on that rail line. We have used taxpayers' money to build that line over the years. They should be able to see it used. It is an absolute tragedy to see trucks carting bulk ore and new mines coming online considering putting their ore on the road when there is a perfectly good rail line sitting right next to it that should be taking it. We should be using that as an industry-enabling asset that entices people to use it and that creates jobs and keeps our roads safe, not ripping up the Flinders Highway. It is wasting taxpayers' money just ripping that up. We need some action from the government through Queensland Rail so it is used as an industry enabler to entice all the users back on to the line and we do not have bulk ore going on the roads.