




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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ADJOURNMENT

Mount Isa Electorate

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.35 pm): I rise to speak about a number of issues, the first being the Etheridge shire irrigation scheme. Mayor Warren Devlin and his council are doing a terrific job. They are very enthusiastic about getting irrigation going on the Gilbert and Einasleigh. There is good alluvial soils along that river and a real appetite to develop irrigation. The council has been very innovative in terms of how it will apply for that water and allocate it to individuals so that irrigation opportunities are available to existing graziers along that river and not just one or two big users. It would act as an adjunct to the existing cattle industry. I think that is where we want to be with irrigation on that river. I commend the council for what it has done. I know that that is the future for that region, because the town is doing it very tough. They do not want handouts from the government; they just need the ability to fight for themselves.

I refer to the recent announcement in relation to Dugald River, that the workforce will come primarily from Cloncurry and Mount Isa and then accept FIFO from Townsville. It is very concerning to people when there is more talk about FIFO. They say that the Ernest Henry mine in Cloncurry employs only about 30 per cent locals right now, even though it is just outside town. Last month's figures show that there is 40 per cent youth unemployment in the outback. That is evident also in Cloncurry. Some people in Townsville and Brisbane might celebrate when they get FIFO in those areas, but it takes from our towns. That is our one chance to try to get ahead, when we have those mines and resource projects that impact on our communities. It is the cancer of the bush. It is not where we want to be as a state. There are a lot of opportunities in the city. We do not want these mines robbing us of jobs in those areas. To me, the jobs are more important than any other business associated with that mine.

I see that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships is present in the House. I refer to the AMP for Mornington Island. We visited Mornington Island the other week and can say that the situation is becoming very urgent. The alcohol ban on Mornington Island was introduced with the best of intentions, but it has inadvertently delivered a lot of problems with home-brew and drugs. There are good, decent people there who just want to be afforded a similar right to every other Australian and have a beer every so often. Birri lodge has closed now so no contractors—Indigenous or non-Indigenous—can have a drink on the island now. It does not look like the lodge will open anytime soon. The issue has been toyed around with for a while, but now the time is right. We need to act because there is a sense of anger and frustration building up that needs to be addressed.