




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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ADJOURNMENT

North West Minerals Province, Energy Costs; Water Trading

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (7.22 pm): I rise to speak on two separate issues, the first being a sustainable resources corridor between Townsville and Mount Isa, servicing the North West Minerals Province. One of the greatest projects we have at the moment is CopperString, which is finally connecting the North West Minerals Province to the national electricity grid. At the moment, users are paying between \$150 and \$200 a megawatt hour. For an individual mine out there, and there are a number of them, an energy bill could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. They are paying \$150 to \$200 a megawatt hour. If they were based in Townsville or on the coast and were connected to the grid, they would be paying around \$60 a megawatt hour. If we can build the transmission line to connect that area, we could bring the price down to at least \$100 a megawatt hour.

Members can imagine what would happen if we said to a large energy user in Queensland that we would reduce their energy costs by a third. Can members now imagine the stimulus that would give to a great-performing minerals province? This project does not need a lot of government money. It does not need a lot of state contribution. It needs a little assistance at the front end and the rest will take care of itself. The project already has good support from the federal government, but it needs someone from the state to drive it so that it gets done.

This project means a lot to Townsville. It does not affect just Mount Isa. I would love to hear people such as the member for Thuringowa talk about it in this place, because it is important for Townsville. Over 1,500 workers from Townsville work in the North West Minerals Province. We talk about Queensland Nickel and its impact on Townsville. Can members imagine if we brought the price of energy down by a third out there? But this is not just about bringing down energy prices. It is about connecting that area to the grid and protecting it from a monopoly situation involving a large gas producer. APA owns the power station and the pipes. Mica Creek is on wobbly wheels out there. It does not have many customers left. No-one wants to be left with only one provider.

Finally, I want to talk about water licences. There is a lot of focus on the Murray Darling, but we need the Hughenden irrigation project and the Hells Gates Dam project to go ahead. We must remember that if the focus is on water trading and the price of water in those areas, it will always be about the price of the water and not about stimulating agriculture. We should be stimulating agriculture to provide a broad-scale economic benefit, not only to some big wealthy developer but also to a lot of little farmers and to the little bloke who can get in there and have a go. Eddie McGuire is one of the biggest water licence owners. He is there not to stimulate farming but to make money from water. When that is the focus, when there is an ideological shift from a development ideal to the pricing of water, people will suffer.