



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

---

Record of Proceedings, 17 September 2019

**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Mount Isa, Youth Crime; Fuel Security**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.36 pm): I rise to talk about youth crime in Mount Isa. Over the years social problems have grown in Mount Isa and the north-west. In the past few weeks we have seen further bad incidents. We are often forgotten in the mix. There is a lot of talk about Townsville, Cairns and other areas of the state—I know that they have their problems—but the reality is that, for most offences, the crime rate per capita in our area is five to 10 times higher than in South Brisbane. Comparing Mount Isa to South Brisbane, the rate of assaults in Mount Isa is 12 times higher, for unlawful entry and break-ins it is 3.5 times higher, for drug offences it is three times higher and for domestic violence it is 10 times higher. They are some pretty awful statistics. Governments of any persuasion should be losing sleep over these sorts of statistics. These issues need some deep consideration and attention and, more importantly, action. It is nice to have studies to look into these things, but action is required and the right people need to be involved.

What are some of the influences at play here? One is the alcohol bans in the Northern Territory. There are still unresolved issues surrounding that. There need to be discussions between the Queensland government and the Northern Territory government to try to resolve some of those issues. For people escaping alcohol bans the first port of call is Mount Isa. Another influence is the failing blue card system. People cannot access jobs in their communities. If they turn to substance abuse, their kids start wandering and often end up in Mount Isa and perhaps Townsville. Other influences are the declining number of jobs in traditional industries such as the railways and the lack of access to title deeds in communities. These are all factors that have contributed to the decline in families and the structure of families. Often it results in kids wandering around the streets.

Regardless of the causes of these problems—they are not new; they have been there for a number of years—we need the right action to be taken. The KAP has a relocation sentencing policy. You can call it whatever you want, but it is a pretty simple principle: you need a circuit-breaker. When the police pick up these kids, often they do not know what to do. We all know that Cleveland is not working for these kids and it is getting jammed up. The magistrate has a decision between sending them to Cleveland and putting them back on the street. There are some available programs. You need something in between.

There is broad consensus on the need for a circuit-breaker by taking these kids out of town. I have seen these kids who have played up in town out at Urandangi, on the Mona project: they are quiet, they are easy to control, they become engaged and they start learning skills. That is what needs to happen. When these kids are out there they are not thinking about trying to get into town to cause mischief. They are out in a remote area and are forced to consider these things.

A processing centre is a good circuit-breaker, but it needs to happen now. It needed to happen a year or two ago. There is no more time for studies; we need this to happen. We need it as much for Townsville as we need it for Mount Isa and all those places in-between. I have experienced what these

programs can do. There are some good programs out there and some really good people working in them right now, but that is not enough. We need that circuit-breaker in the processing centre, and relocation sentencing—or whatever we want to call it—needs to play a role in that. From that point we can teach them and get them re-engaged in school, send them back into programs and process them into the programs that are most suitable for the child in question. That desperately needs to happen. It is bad in Mount Isa, but we have had some real troubles in Normanton. We are crying out for help on this from the government. We definitely need action in that regard.

In the time remaining I want to make reference to the discussion in the media federally about fuel security—that is, the fact that there are two to three weeks fuel supply. The discussion keeps avoiding the elephant in the room—that is, ethanol or biofuels. A 10 per cent ethanol blend on fuel in Australia will cost the taxpayer nothing. If anything, it will bring down the price of fuel. Every other country—the 63 other countries—in the world all mandated ethanol, and that is one of the primary reasons why they have fuel security. It certainly is one of the primary drivers in the US so it has fuel security. It reduces car tailpipe emissions by 30 per cent, so it is akin to taking 30 per cent of cars off the road in Australia. Even if people do not care about that, they should worry about fuel security. It is a problem. There is a solution sitting there, but it needs to be driven by government at a state and federal level. Oil companies will keep dancing around it unless there is firm action from government. Just like when we moved from leaded petrol to unleaded petrol, unless companies are forced to do it, it is not going to happen, we will not have an industry and we will always be battling fuel security.