



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 October 2019

**MOTION**

**Non-Government Members, Resources**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (12.43 pm): I move—

That this House notes that—

1. 30 years ago the Fitzgerald report stated that non-government party members must be provided with appropriate resources and detailed information to enable them to supervise and criticise;
2. the Fitzgerald report recommended the creation of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC) and it conduct a review of the provision of non-government members with appropriate resources of staff and equipment, and proper access to information in respect of government activities;
3. EARC's subsequent report recommended that the total staff establishment of opposition parties should be maintained at 20 per cent of the staff establishment of ministerial offices; reflect parity with the salary profile of ministerial staff; and the allocation of the opposition parties' staff establishment to particular opposition parties should be on the basis of the proportion of seats held by the party;
4. in 2018 the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) recommended that the process to decide an appropriate level of resourcing for all members of parliament should be determined by an independent entity, such as the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal (QIRT);
5. to date the recommendations of the Fitzgerald report, EARC and the CCC have not been implemented;
6. the public interest would be served by ensuring independent, objective and consistent assessment of duties and resources of non-government members, and bring Queensland in line with NSW, Vic and SA; and
7. calls on the government to amend the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal Act to give QIRT the function of deciding the resources of non-government members.

This motion relates directly to the issue that has been dealt with in the parliament this morning. My focus is on resources provided to non-government members of parliament. The other week I noted that everyone was fist-pumping the air and celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Fitzgerald report. A year ago I got a visit from Terry O'Gorman, who said that, conveniently, one of the most important recommendations has never been followed through on by either of the major parties. That recommendation was that decision-making regarding the allocation of resources to non-government members be taken away from the government of the day. It is quite convenient for the government of the day, but it does not serve the best interests of the Queensland people. That is what makes it a very important issue. Adopting this proposal would just bring Queensland into line with other states and the federal parliament.

Crossbench members facing the pressure of representing large electorates need resources to try to broaden the debate in parliament. We have electorate office staff who handle electorate issues, but in terms of parliamentary representation the government and the opposition are well resourced in terms of support. Today's debate of the Ethics Committee report is an example of what we face. On a very big issue, we were given a 23-page document to digest without any staff resources. We are writing our own questions on notice and handling electorate issues while we are here in parliament. It puts extreme pressure on us to perform. I do not think it is an adequate or fair allocation of resources.

I have heard criticism in this House that the crossbench do not stand for much. That was in the context of the policy fund created under the Newman government for the minor parties. One of the members of the major parties said that nothing serious comes out of the crossbench. I took great offence at that. The performance of crossbench members has shown the nonsense of that comment. The KAP has introduced a number of private members' bills and three of them have been passed by parliament. That is out of just 14 or 15 in Queensland's history. If judging worth on bill activity alone, we have proven that there is a lot of value to Queensland voters in broadening parliamentary resources beyond the two major parties. That is an important point to make.

A lot of the crossbench members are from rural and regional areas. Mine is the biggest electorate. I am resourced with an extra electorate officer—I am grateful for that—but there is still a pretty big disadvantage when 10 or 20 hours every week is spent in the car or on the plane and you are trying to get across issues for debate in parliament, when you are asked to give a good, educated view in front of media and when people are constantly seeking a voice outside of the position of Liberal or Labor. That is a pretty big imposition, given that a lot of us are rural and regional members. It is very difficult.

Further evidence of the value the crossbench provides is that we get a lot of deputations from people. They come to see us and say, 'We have talked to both sides, but we would really like you to voice this in parliament.' As a result of that we have raised some really important issues, such as access for the visually-impaired to disability parking permits. People come to us to raise issues in parliament when other members are not getting across them. We provide a very valuable resource. I would say that we provide very good value to the taxpayer. Additional resources can only enhance debate in the parliament. I think we would all appreciate having a broader discussion of issues. I think it can only be better for Queenslanders to allocate resources fairly across non-government members.

It is time for the crossbench to force the major parties in this parliament to do what they have been instructed to do for the past 30 years since the Fitzgerald report: take decisions relating to non-government resources away from political decision-makers.