



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2021

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Julia Creek Hospital**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.27 pm): I rise to talk primarily about the Julia Creek Hospital, which in November was downgraded from a level 2 to a level 1 facility. It is a new hospital. The government invested \$7 million in rebuilding that hospital a couple of years ago, so it is a brand new building that was downgraded because they could not find the staff.

There are a lot of reasons for that. COVID was one. We have also become reliant on locums from overseas and interstate which is not a sustainable model. That is not a new problem. It has been a problem for a long time, yet it remains unaddressed and it hurts us in remote areas the most. These towns are struggling for survival. The repercussions are that once you lose doctors or nurses or services people leave town and then you have fewer teachers and fewer children at school. The problem then self-manifests. It is a very big deal to have services downgraded. It is absolutely devastating to the town.

The mayor, Philip Curr, and deputy mayor, Janene Fegan, have been working very hard trying to get a meeting with the minister to resolve this. The CEO of the North West HHS, Karen Murphy, has been doing a terrific job trying to hold things together. As most people probably would not know, Mount Isa is an anomaly when it comes to hospital funding. It is activity based funding, where most western or remote hospitals such as hospitals in the cape are all block funded. Mount Isa has a much bigger advantage. The North West HHS struggles to keep all of this together. It needs extra support and it needs effort from government. We need to look at the training and the skill set that is commensurate with remoteness. We need to be flexible in the skill set and the level of training that we would accept in those areas such as recognition of overseas skill sets for nurses and doctors. It needs effort.

We are struggling to keep things alive. I do not want to hear about billions of dollars going to a pitch for the Olympic Games. Nurses and doctors need incentives. The dialysis unit in Mount Isa is a disgrace. It looks like downtown Mumbai. We have 10 chairs and Alice Springs has 70, but that is not a priority because we are going to embark on new pieces of social infrastructure and aspire to host the Olympic Games. How about we fix this stuff first? This is very important. Without health infrastructure these places do not survive. That is a priority; these other things are not. Along with incentives for nurses and recognition of skills there is a lot of work that can be done in this space and it needs attention. Elderly people who wanted to live and die in Julia Creek have had to move from town. At the very least we can have nurses there to keep those two elderly people from being displaced and at least adequate medical services in a new medical building.