




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2021

MOTION

Schools, Free Meals

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.25 pm): I rise to make a contribution in the debate on the motion moved by crossbench member, the member for South Brisbane. I appreciate the member bringing something fresh into the parliament and putting pressure on government, as we should always do, to strive to do better for our kids. A very good point is raised. We have to consider where we direct our wealth.

I would take a particular point of view and prioritise other areas before this, but it is an important question to ask the House—that is, what benefits are we getting from mining activity and other industries and where are those benefits going? Our party has spoken a lot about the Olympic Games and prioritising other things. There are priorities in my electorate that I feel strongly about that should be addressed well before any games bid or any rail tunnel. I guess that is what the member for South Brisbane is putting to the House. That is a legitimate thing to do.

The minister mentioned the Mount Isa Central State School and Mornington Island State School. They have excellent programs. One I would have liked to have checked but did not have time to today is Sunset State School's breakfast program. I think they are self-funding at least part of their program, which is magnificent. I imagine that something is kicked in. That is real testament to them. They have very strong Indigenous participation and it has been a roaring success. We do not always have teachers and principals as motivated as that principal so it is not always going to work out that way. I acknowledge that there are government programs.

There is a counterpoint to this that has come across my bow. A good friend of mine in Mount Isa is a real battler. She has struggled through life and put her kids through private school. She was pretty upset when I discussed this issue with her previously. They are working hard and battling at home, but their friends with kids at the state school have an advantage in this regard. I acknowledge the counterpoint that there is that cohort of society that would be on the margins in this regard.

I think it is an excellent sentiment. It is something that we should be working towards. There should be something there. I am swimming in underprivileged kids in my electorate. They really struggle. They would really benefit from that type of initiative. There is no question about it, but with a full belly kids will learn better. There is direct evidence of that at Sunset State School and I am sure at the other schools in my electorate that the minister named. I have certainly seen this firsthand at Sunset State School where the principal, Bryon Burke, has done a magnificent job with their program. It does have a place.

It should be an aspiration that we in this place should have. I would see other priorities before that in terms of the spending of \$374 million per year. I am just a little naive or ignorant as to the costs of this and marrying that up against the other priorities that we have in our electorates. It makes me somewhat apprehensive at this stage.

I acknowledge there are programs already out there. There has been assistance and they have been very well received. I think it is very healthy to be bringing motions such as this into the House. I think some of the criticism is pretty unfair. I have heard the criticism and I have had it directed at me many times—that this is not researched and this is useless. I disagree. I think it is perfectly legitimate—in fact, very important—to be stretching the government to its limits in terms of compassion and empathy. Are we doing enough for our kids? It is a very important role of this parliament. We do not have the resources to road-test everything as comprehensively as government resources would allow. That is also an important point to reflect on.