




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Remote Queensland, Bus Services

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.18 pm): A lot of issues get lost, particularly in remote and regional areas where they may not be picked up at all. One that came to my attention which was deeply concerning was the shutdown of Greyhound bus services through the COVID-19 period. The government saw fit to put a \$1.2 billion subsidy into the airlines. I understand that there are other motivations for that to do with tourism and business, but a lot of wealthy people can afford to fly between Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne whereas most people using buses cannot afford anything else. A lot of them do not have a car. In Mount Isa, 92 per cent of the people travel between Tennant Creek and Mount Isa, and I can assure you that a lot of those people do not have cars. That presents a real problem in itself.

Rex Airlines enjoyed a subsidy of some \$50 million, I believe it was. As a result of that subsidy they decided to expand their operations. They were a regional airline but they have expanded into metropolitan areas. People in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne who are rich enough to buy a plane ticket now have more options as a result of competition. For those who live in remote areas there are no longer any options. There is no conduit to get into the territory, which I think is a big problem. The government has been notified of this. It is a big problem that needs to be solved.

While mentioning the territory, I point out that we have been talking about youth crime in this House today. Everyone is turning a blind eye to the problem there. Sitting behind this is the intervention in the territory by the federal government. They stopped access to alcohol and introduced the BasicsCard. It seemed like a great idea, but it has forced people from the territory who are addicted to alcohol and drugs to come into Mount Isa. They can cash their BasicsCard at Centrelink in Mount Isa.

What are they going to do? Of course they are going to move from Tennant Creek or the other communities in the territory to Mount Isa. We are not solving anything or helping anyone by allowing them to do that. Someone has to be tough here. Those in Mount Isa who complain the most about this are the Kalkadoon people. They keep coming into my office saying, 'You have to do something about this. These people do not belong here. They have houses where they came from. You are not helping them by letting them live in the river bed.' That is a big problem.

Lastly, with Anzac Day coming up, I want to talk about something that I am very proud of. My grandfather was the federal minister for defence in the McMahon government. The Bell Kiowa helicopter was introduced in his time. He said that it should be called the Kalkadoon helicopter so they had a big ceremony and painted a boomerang on the side of the helicopter. When they were voted out of government the name was changed. It was a wonderful testament to the area that I am from and the culture and history of the area that that name was branded on those helicopters. I believe that they have now been decommissioned. Given the 100-year celebration of the RAAF, I think it is worth celebrating that Mount Isa had that recognition in the Australian Defence Force.