




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Regional Queensland, Health Services; Rail Network

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.38 pm): I rise initially to speak about the crisis we are facing in Queensland's health sector. It was bad before the pandemic started; now it is unbearable and is more acute in those remote areas, many of which I represent. If you are waiting to see a speech therapist in my area, there are 1.8 FTE speech pathologists catering for 22 schools in the north-west district. There are 10 speech therapists spread over seven organisations, and there is a six to 12-month waiting list.

I know of one mother in Cloncurry who had her kid enrolled. There were about 22 kids waiting for speechies and OTs in Cloncurry. They were being seen every 10 to 15 weeks but had funding for once every two weeks. That is not very nice. My sister in Brisbane gets interaction with those almost every day. They are the sorts of options you get here in Brisbane. If you want to live in Cloncurry, you will get one every 10 weeks. How would you like that? It is not enough.

Ms Boyd: They can't get staff.

Mr KATTER: If they cannot get staff, that is someone's problem. That is what the government should be focused on—not on the Olympic Games and not on \$250 million for satellite hospitals down here in the south-east. Is that your priority? I think these are the priorities. These are things you need to be looking at.

We have a GP shortage. There should be about 20 in Mount Isa; there are about eight. Try dealing with that. We do not have a doctor in Doomadgee, Mornington Island or Normanton hospitals at the moment. Patients are being transferred by the Royal Flying Doctor Service to Townsville and Cairns, where there are shortages as well. These are big problems. They are not going away. They were there before the pandemic and they are worse now. They need to be dealt with. I admit that some of these things are federal issues as well, but the state cannot walk away from its responsibilities here. There are no CT scanners, and renal patients are still awaiting dialysis services. These are terrible issues!

The last thing I want to talk about is cattle rail in my area. There was a tender awarded to Watco. Aurizon has been the operator for years. They were the legacy owner of the state owned assets. I heard the Treasurer this morning talking about asset sales and retaining electricity assets. Bully for you, except you forgot to mention that you sold the rail assets. Aurizon's CEO is now paid close to \$5 million a year. That role used to be filled by a director in the department who was paid presumably \$400,000 to \$500,000. Then we could not afford to employ all these people in the towns that I represent. That has killed the economies of a lot of these towns.

Now we are complaining about Aurizon, a legacy purchaser of those assets, not giving them over to the new owners. These are the problems you face when you sell these assets. Community infrastructure should be shared. There is no obligation on a private operator that has paid for something to share it with future successful tenderers. That is one of many problems created when you privatise these assets. Shame on the government for selling that. It has been a terrible legacy of the Labor government.