




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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ADJOURNMENT

Mount Isa, Water Security; Social Housing

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.16 pm): There has been a sharp rise in water costs in the Mount Isa City Council area. It was changed to a user-pays system a number of years ago. We have the benefit of large water supplies out there. We have two big dams—Lake Moondarra and Lake Julius, with separate owners. We have bountiful water surprisingly for such an arid climate, but we do not use the water because it is too expensive.

The state government takes a big chunk of it. There is an anomaly in the way those dams are governed. One of the main dams is built by the mines and it has a water board. Seqwater needs to take over those assets and manage them to improve the regional security of water. That would provide benefits to the ratepayers of Mount Isa. There could be benefits of up to \$500 per ratepayer. That would be a huge saving. It is an elegant solution for the state and for the council to address those two problems. It needs to happen and I think it would benefit all Queenslanders.

I also want to talk about itinerants in Mount Isa. This is causing a huge social problem. Alcohol bans in the Territory have seen Mount Isa become an attractive place for people to come and drink and live in the riverbeds. It causes enormous social disruption. Living like this does not help anyone. This lifestyle does not help them or their families.

A lot of housing in the NT remains vacant where those people have presumably come from. There is no interaction between our government and theirs to sort this out. No-one wants to own the problem. We in Mount Isa are paying the price for the problem. It is really hard for people who have lived there a long time to come back to visit and see what is happening there at the moment. It is not a place to be proud of, to walk the streets at the moment and see the number of itinerants drunk and misbehaving. They deserve better and the people of Mount Isa deserve better than just pretending it does not happen.

There needs to be a discussion about tightening up that housing inventory. They should say, 'Mate, if you have a house over there, you either have to vacate it or move back to that house. You cannot live in a river bed when you have a house.' You cannot do this if you do not have visibility on either side. I have spoken to Territory counterparts who have said, 'You are right. We would like to solve this problem as well. It is a problem for us if you do not have good optics and visibility on housing.' When it comes to the itinerants, we cannot fix the problems if we do not know where they are. There are the subsequent youth justice problems that come along with that dysfunction. There is no point pretending the problem does not exist. They are hard conversations to have. These problems would not just be confined to Mount Isa. They will continue to spill out to other areas if left unaddressed.