




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Traeger Electorate, Services

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.45 pm): Where in the world, I ask members of the House, would they expect to have access to only two potatoes per household or expect to receive their mail two months after it was sent? Would it be Africa or Russia perhaps? How about Burketown in North Queensland? That is some of the adversity that we are facing due to the inability of the government to provide proper road access via the gulf roads. The roads through to Burketown only opened this week and last year there were also months of closure, and that leads to multiple failures in many areas.

To expand on the Australia Post example, if people order parts for a car or a helicopter or if the council orders IT parts, those items will be sent from Townsville to Cloncurry. If the road is closed, they will just say, 'That's a bit tricky.' Even though we can get other goods and food up there, they will send those items back to a depot in Townsville to sit for two months until the roads allow access. How are people supposed to run a business or a household like that? People are literally moving away from these communities now, saying, 'We can't put up with this.'

Honourable members can understand the frustration we in the KAP feel in representing these areas. We come down here and hear all the talk about the Olympics, which is likely to end up a \$20 billion scenario, or the \$7 billion Cross River Rail project and we are putting up with that sort of thing in Queensland. It cannot be accepted. These sorts of problems can be resolved with bridge access over the Nicholson and Barkly rivers and Running Creek. Some of those are not big ticket items to fix. Up until recently, taxpayers have been paying to fly groceries into this place and it is an ever-increasing bill. It is very expensive. We are doing that because there is no long-term plan to build those bridges and the proper infrastructure.

We talk about health. A boy from Normanton rang and asked, 'Can we quickly get a plane in? I am going to miss the surgery in Townsville that I have been waiting for because the roads are cut off.' They could not get a plane out but he was lucky to get a lift in a food truck and another car to cross the rivers. Those are everyday things that we face—that was the Gilbert River crossing, which needs a bridge—because things have been neglected over the past 20 or 30 years. We have to catch up somehow.

Doomadgee recently had the benefit—and I say that sarcastically—of 10 days without mobile phone coverage because Telstra said they could not find a helicopter to bring someone in. New standards have just been applied to helicopters in the region that could further limit access to helicopters. Burketown is now suffering a phone service outage. It is really important that people understand that such adversity needs to be matched with investment to stop that sort of thing from happening.