



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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**MOTION**

**North Queensland, Secession**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (4.30 pm): I move—

That this House supports taking the necessary steps to form a separate state of North Queensland in accordance with section 124 of the Commonwealth Constitution.

The last time a state, or colony, was formed was in 1859, and that was Queensland. At the same time, the USA had formed close to 20 new states—17 new states since 1869. Geoffrey Blainey said—

Australia has created no new states since 1959; the United States in contrast has created close to 20. For a land of this size we do not have enough states. We thus miss one of the advantages of federalism.

Bernard Salt, an Australian demographer, said that it is only a matter of time until people awaken and expand their cognitive bandwidth to say, 'Maybe we can do things differently in Australia.' Those lines drawn on a map 165 years ago perhaps are not meant to be there indefinitely, forever and ever. At what stage in our history do we question that and say, 'Maybe we can move that. Maybe it would make sense.' The tipping point is to ask: is there a cultural connection or is there a cultural divide between some of these areas and can we govern those areas better with more autonomy? I know the arguments that are going to come up: 'Oh, we're already doing that.' I can assure you that from our optics you are not.

Let's look at Cape York, for instance. Vegetation management is a huge political issue driven, I would say, out of geographic narcissism. That means that people in the city say, 'We have these values. We think these values should be imposed on you up there.' I can assure the House that 90 per cent of North Queensland does not want these vegetation management laws. Cape York has over 90 per cent remnant forest and there is perhaps five per cent down here, yet you are applying the same laws to both here and Cape York. If you said to someone up there, 'Would you like to clear two or three per cent of your property?' we would love that. It would have an amazing commercial benefit. We have only over a hundred thousand head of cattle up there in Cape York. They are not even putting a dent on the landscape. You could put in a million head of cattle up there. It would actually be good for the forest up there to have some more activity.

Cape York gets 52 million megalitres of rainfall a year and has just over a 100,000 head of cattle. Compare that to Victoria, which gets 19 million megalitres of rainfall a year—versus 52 million megalitres of rainfall in Cape York—and has 4.2 million head of cattle. This debate is not just about cattle or Cape York, but you can see how frustrated we are that there is all this resource but we do not get to use it because of decisions made 2,000 or 3,000 kilometres away. They are ridiculous decisions. The vegetation management science was flawed, again. You did not have any measure of the regrowth. It was a political decision made from here.

Another good example to give as a metaphor for this debate is the North Queensland Cowboys. The NRL said at the time that the empirical evidence said we should not have a team up there: 'You don't have the finances, the resources, the commercial activity or the player base to support a team up there. It could not possibly happen.' Well it did! We built a team. We built a player base. Businesses got behind it. We have a great new stadium now. They played the other Queensland team to create a terrific Queensland contest, and they got to the grand final and won. They were the national champions. The NRL nationally is better for having the Cowboys. It is better from expanding, from dividing and creating that second Queensland team. That is a metaphor for what we can do for Australia and for Queensland.

This is not about being parochial. It is not that anyone wants to separate. There is a cultural indifference, I believe, in the city towards those areas up north. People say, 'We couldn't possibly leave you in charge of the environment. You would destroy it,' or 'We couldn't possibly let you handle Indigenous issues or, God forbid, have them control themselves. We have to make those decisions from down here because you will never be mature enough.'

Tasmania has 500,000 people, with a GDP of \$41 billion, and they have 12 senators. For North Queensland there is a requirement for zero senators. You could argue that they have two senators but, on a pro rata basis, we have a GDP of \$90 billion and close to one million people. How can that be fair?

I can give a long catalogue of policies that are made down here that are pretty good and probably work in South-East Queensland but they are either irrelevant or destructive in rural and regional areas. We are sick of coming down here and arguing, 'I get what you are doing for Brisbane, but that is not going to help us.'

Another great example I could give you is renal units versus the Olympic Games. In Mount Isa we have 10 renal chairs. Alice Springs has over 60. We do not have the money to build a renal unit in Mount Isa, but we have over \$20 billion to spend on the Olympic Games. Even if you say it is \$7 billion, it is still a lot of money that could be spent up north.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member's time has expired. Ride 'em Cowboys!