




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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**TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (MARINE SAFETY) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
REGULATION**

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.12 pm): I rise to support the dissolution motion put forward by my colleague the member for Hinchinbrook and to support the words of my other colleague, the member for Hill. We could say that technically this disallowance motion is about life jackets, but as was said in the lead speech by the member for Hinchinbrook it is actually about freedoms. How often do we find ourselves in conversations about removing monkey bars and merry-go-rounds from parks because they are deemed unsafe for kids and then talk about living in a world where we take responsibility for our own safety? These regulations will keep on coming and we will end up living wrapped in cottonwool and driving our cars at 40 kilometres an hour because that is the only risk everyone is willing to tolerate. There are massive impacts on livability that are never really measured in any of this because they are intangible. However, we all feel good about ourselves because no-one can argue against the fact that it will save lives.

As the member for Hinchinbrook pointed out, the attractive part of living in North Queensland is freedom. When people move to Mount Isa they say, 'You know what I love about Mount Isa? You can drive for 20 kays and go camping. You don't have to tell anyone. It's the freedom of the place. You can just go out to the lake.' That is why we live up there. It is one of the great things about it. When you pose a one-size-fits-all rule across the whole state then it really has an impact on us. We have talked about the heat and discomfort, but what I see as a major point is taking responsibility for ourselves and our kids.

This motion would not stop responsible people from making their kids or anyone else on their boat wear life jackets. They can do that. I found it interesting when I reflected on my own family. For my kids, we have cute little life jackets with fish tails on them. I said to my wife, 'I want to put the floaties on the kids so I feel more comfortable with them in the pool.' She said, 'No, I refuse, because you'll get a false sense of security. We both will. I want you watching the kids in the pool.' That works. I do not take my eyes off those kids because it is my responsibility if something happens to them. They are never out of my eyesight and the floaties never go on them when they are in the pool.

We can apply the same principle with this issue. We have to put some blocks somewhere for the public; otherwise, inch by inch, there will be an incremental approach until we are all wrapped in cottonwool. We will all be driving our cars at 50 kilometres an hour because everyone will be safer. Guess what? It would not make us safer because people will still do stupid things. You can never legislate for idiots, but still we come in here to try to save lives by introducing more and more regulations and \$80,000 fines. Most people will do the right thing and will try to be responsible, and we will all feel good about ourselves; however, we cannot keep lobbing this stuff on the public, whether it is about life jackets, speed limits or all of the other regulations. A choke has to be put on this at some point.

This is a big issue for us because North Queensland is hot and we all love to enjoy the waterways. The more accessible that is and the more freedoms there are around it, the better for us. We talk to mining companies and government agencies about attracting staff such as nurses and doctors. They say, 'Just increase your livability.' Guess what our livability is about? We do not get water slides. We do not have shopping centres. We do not get public transport. What we get are freedoms. Constraining that just puts another nail in the coffin of regional and remote areas. We are trying to keep those areas alive by making sure we have something to attract people to them.

We hear so much about how the state is racked with a crime problem, particularly a youth crime problem. In the Traeger electorate, a lot of boaties will be questioning why it is that they could face an \$80,000 fine when the thieves who just stole their car get away with everything. That is a pretty reasonable question for them to ask. How is it fair that the parliament is focusing on this and that we are introducing these sorts of things when we have other bigger problems. This is not just about life jackets; it is about taking a stand for personal freedoms. It has to start somewhere. On every issue we bring in here, whether it is vehicle speeds or other safety things, members can say until the cows come home, 'But it's about saving lives.' We have some absolutely ridiculous rules encroaching in this space right now. I am dealing with an unrelated issue in fire and rescue around the use of Robinson R44 helicopters, which they say are not safe. I ask: by whose standards? There are no clear metrics on this. They say, 'It's not safe so we are using this.' It is not practical or workable but we all want to feel good about making people safer.

They all seem like good rules that we make down here, but they have very real and significant implications for the north. Members can kid themselves with their own little stories of how it is going to be applied or how it applied to their lives, but I can assure members that these things do have an impact on our freedoms and they do impact our lifestyle. In five years time we will be having a barbecue conversation in which someone will say, 'What idiot brought this in?' Surely there are better things to focus on than this. Let us all take responsibility for our own safety. Let us put a bit more responsibility back on individuals and have fewer government regulations, which we are imposing on everything.