




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 13 March 2025

ADJOURNMENT

North-West Queensland, Special Economic Zone

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (9.24 pm): I rise to say that in the North West Minerals Province we are now in a state of economic emergency. There have been numerous mine closures, many of which are related to malaise and a lack of suitable fit-for-purpose policy. Some of these things just need policy adjustment and do not need money. It requires the treatment of Mount Isa to Townsville as a special economic zone. There are a bundle of issues that need to be fixed there that do not fit the models of governance and policy that come out of Brisbane.

Firstly, we need to talk about CopperString, which is a big part of the mix out there. There is a high cost of energy from a monopoly supplier, APA. It would be broken by connecting us to the NEM. There has been some great support from the previous government and now this current government for CopperString. However, Powerlink has failed to take that up. There was a rather deceptive comment this week by the CEO, Paul Simshauser, who said that he inherited a project two years ago that was at concept stage and he has taken it to construction. It was not at concept stage at all. It had full environmental federal approvals and it had contract approval for the construction of it. It was shovel-ready; he got a shovel-ready project. The government took it and ordered them to build it, and here we are two years later and that CEO is saying they might decide to start building it somewhere else now.

After two years, we have some dongas up in Hughenden and an interpretive centre in Townsville. There are mines out there quite literally saying, 'We can't make the billion dollar financial decision. They can't even give us a price after two years.' That is disgusting, it is a disgrace and it is embarrassing. That is why we have called for him to be stood down. The chairwoman forgot to tell us all that she was also on the board of a gas company in the Northern Territory that has deals with APA, which is the counterpoint to CopperString, which is the monopoly provider of power in the North West Minerals Province. To me, that is a pretty big conflict of interest and it is irreconcilable. It does not help when they are in the road with those sorts of things.

CopperString needs to be put up now. You cannot play around with the aspirations and the confidence of people from Townsville to Mount Isa. We are all banking on it going ahead. The mines out there are saying, 'We've got to make investment decisions.' They cannot plan. Tell me if I am wrong, but if you are building a house or units and you are selling off the plan, you have to work out a budget and have some discipline around a budget so you can offer a price. After two years, they are not capable of giving a price to their customers. They must go. CopperString needs to be resolved. We need to resolve the rail and the water utilities. They cannot be treated as cash cows. They need to be used as levers of industry which will be covered by a special economic zone.