

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

December 6, 2018

KAP BLASTS LATEST ATTACK ON RURAL VALUES

Katter's Australian Party MPs have blasted the Palaszczuk Government over what it has described as an "unrelenting attack on rural values", following the news that the government will close Queensland's last two agricultural colleges in 2019.

Katter's Australian Party State Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said KAP offices had been inundated with complaints about the closures during the past 24 hours.

He said the rural sector needed to send the major parties, at both the State and Federal levels, a clear message that it is tired of the bush being victimised.

"I find it purely insulting that so much of the decision-making in rural, regional and remote Queensland is being driven by researchers and officers that are not based in their area of influence," he said.

"The LNP closed and sold off the Burdekin Agriculture College and Toorak Station at Julia Creek, so they are in no position to criticise any of this.

"The major parties pay the regions so much lip service but it is essential that any government that is truly interested in developing the North will have some facility based in that area educating in the skills required to develop it.

"We desperately need a new regional research and educational facility for North Australia in Hughenden, Richmond or Julia Creek, which would offer vocational training, environmental science research and extension.

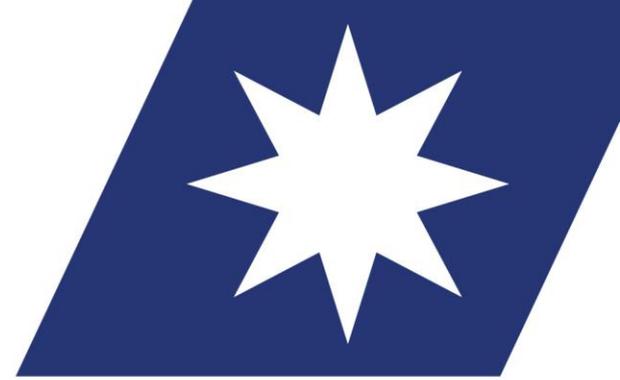
"But instead of investing in this, the Government is taking the time to close our institutions down under the veil of a "review" process that many have been sceptical of since the start.

"The Coaldrake review into the colleges has claimed the decision is the result of 'steeply declining enrolments since the 2011-12 period – not so surprisingly the majority of the state has been in drought since 2012.

"This is short-sightedness by a government at its very worst."

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The Palaszczuk Government announced yesterday that the colleges at Emerald and Longreach will close for good in 2019, with suggestions circling that at least one of them could be turned into a refugee centre or a prison.

Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto said it was clear the State Government's decision to close both colleges, which will see at least 100 jobs lost across central-west Queensland, was part of a broader attack on the agricultural industry.

"First it was the government's disastrous vegetation management laws, then they cut funding to the School to Industry Partnership Program and now we have yet another blow with the closures of these colleges," he said.

"It seems Labor's message is if you want an education, a job or a future, then it's time to move to the city."

The KAP, led by Hill MP Shane Knuth, will sponsor a petition calling on the government to immediately reverse the decision to close the colleges.

An online link to the petition will be made public in the coming days.

Mr Knuth said he had been contacted by a lot of young people in the community who were devastated about the closures

"It appears the State Government has no interest in the industry, don't see it as valuable and would rather see imported product on our supermarket shelves," he said.

"My region in the north is an agricultural hub and I have witnessed the impact these type of decisions have on the industry.

"I have also seen the benefits of a thriving agricultural industry and its flow on effects throughout the state, particularly into government coffers, which pays their wages and allows them to govern.

"It's absurd that instead of supporting the industry they are doing their utmost best to destroy it."

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Media inquiries: Morgan Oss, 0428 772 544