

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

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RAIL SPEND WELCOMED AS FIRST STEP FIX

Queensland KAP Leader Robbie Katter has welcomed a long-awaited response from the State Government on his calls to demand action on the Mount Isa-Townsville rail line.

But the Traeger MP has warned energy prices and the rail's pricing structure are still major impediments to progressing the North West Minerals Province (NWMP).

Queensland Treasurer Jackie Trad announced yesterday that \$110 million would be allocated in the State Budget to generate further investment in the mineral-rich region.

The money will build a "pit to port" terminal at Townsville and give discounts on the high freight charges being paid by resource companies to use the Mount Isa-Townsville line.

Mr Katter said he'd been in an ongoing battle talking to deaf ears on the issue for many years, but the State Government's renewed interest in mining had finally prompted action.

He has welcomed the spend, but said the freight issue would not go away unless the rail pricing structure set by the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) was addressed.

"This is good news after so many years of being the lone wolf in Parliament trying to get some action for Townsville and the North West on the rail," he said.

"The rail is the main artery into the port and if it's not performing well then we all fail.

"We desperately still need action on the constraints on rail imposed by the QCA - this is one of the most frustrating inactions of government regarding mining in the NWMP."

Mr Katter said while the freight issue was significant, the high energy prices in the Mount Isa region was the biggest deterrent to future investment.

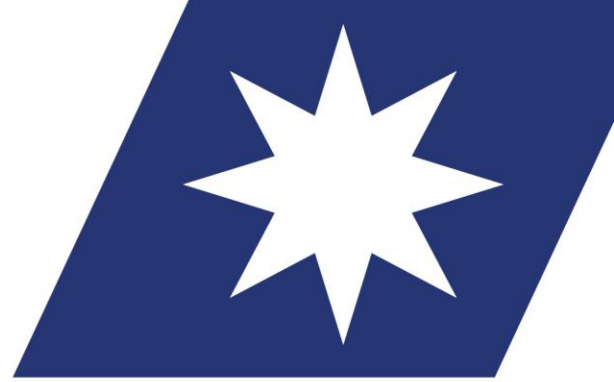
"After a decade of pretty much nothing, we saw the CuString Project granted 'co-ordinated' status by the Co-ordinator-General a few weeks ago," he said.

"It's very disappointing it's taken this long to even be put back on the agenda - energy costs would trump any other constraint on growth in industry in the North West and therefore Townsville."

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Mr Katter said he was seeking assurances rail users would not be unfairly impacted by the State Government's new spend.

"We are wary of the additional announcement of spending on the rail line given that the experience is all costs incurred are displaced back onto the customers," he said.

"So we need assurances that this won't happen following this announcement."

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