

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

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GOVERNMENTS NOW COMPLICIT IN 'AIRWAY ROBBERY'

State KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter has accused the State and Federal Governments of failing Australians by refusing to intervene in the chronically high cost of commercial airfares in rural centres.

Mr Katter's comments follow statements made last week by Queensland Treasurer Jackie Trad that the Mount Isa-Townsville air route does not need regulation to drive down prices.

One-way flights from Mount Isa to Townsville, Cairns and Brisbane are often in excess of \$500 one way, and push closer to at least \$1,000 during busy times.

The Traeger MP said there was low competitive tension between carriers in the Mount Isa region and the dominate nature of some operators meant airfare prices continued to rise despite increased passenger numbers.

He said this demonstrated clear market failure and the need for government intervention.

"People are kidding themselves if they believe competition is the answer on air routes in small centres like Mount Isa, Geraldton in WA or Alice Springs in the Territory - they are ignoring reality," Mr Katter said.

"It is beyond disappointing that in Queensland Labor Government has turned its back on many the workers and residents who are battling out in the rural and regional areas due to burden of flight costs.

"The Treasurer's comments last week sounded like it came straight from the Liberal Party, which is the age old adage to just 'let the market sort it out' and that there is no role for government to play.

"The market has been allowed to sort this out for years and things are worse than ever.

"Mount Isa delivers so much economic benefit to the state – we need people to live out here, but these people need to be able to pay reasonable amounts of money to come and go.

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“It is in everyone’s best interests if our resource and industry-rich smaller centres grow and prosper, and I can tell you now that in the case of Mount Isa one of the greatest hindrances to this is the cost of flights.”

Mr Katter said the government’s shirking of responsibility on the issue came at a significant human cost.

“If the Palaszczuk Government considered the many remote single mums and dads out west who feel isolated from their families on the coast, they would at the very least see merit in and consider regulating the Townsville route,” he said.

“In addition if they were to try to take on these corporate behemoths on behalf of the battler they would insist that operators make pricing visible but in confidence to the government.”

The Traeger MP said the long-awaited Senate Inquiry Report into rural and regional airfares had failed Australians dismally by going only so far to recommend yet another report at taxpayers’ expense, this time by the Australian Productivity Commission.

He said the State Government had the power to demand pricing data from airlines and to regulate routes, two moves he believes could significantly drive down the high costs imposed on Mount Isa passengers.

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