

**ROBBIE KATTER**

Member for Traeger



## MEDIA RELEASE

September 19, 2019

### 30 YEARS AND STILL NO EQUITY FOR MINOR PARTIES: KAP

THE State Government has failed to implement a major recommendation from the Fitzgerald Inquiry that would improve equitable political representation and prevent deliberate and inadvertent interference in representation by the government of the day, State KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry, handed down in July, 1989, recommended that “non-government Parliamentary members (be provided) with appropriate resources of staff and equipment, and proper access to information in respect of Government activities”.<sup>1</sup>

It comes after yesterday’s official launch of a display dedicated to acknowledging the formal tabling of the Fitzgerald Inquiry some 30 years ago at the Parliamentary Annexe.

The Inquiry further found “parliament must have sufficient resources to enable it properly to research topics and evaluate Government proposals.

“Parliament can easily be prevented from properly performing its role by being denied time and resources,” the Inquiry report read.

“Any Government may use its dominance in the Parliament and its control of public resources to stifle and neuter effective criticism by the Opposition.

“An effective Opposition is also essential for the proper functioning of parliamentary democracy. The members.

“Non-government party members must be provided with appropriate resources and detailed information to enable them to supervise and criticise, just as Governments naturally are well equipped and staffed.

“Without information about Government activities and research staff to properly assess it, the Opposition party or parties have no basis on which to review or criticize the activities.

“Without information, there can be no accountability. It follows that in an atmosphere of secrecy or inadequate information, corruption flourishes.

“Wherever secrecy exists, there will be people who are prepared to manipulate it.

“One of the functions of any opposition party in Parliament is to expose errors and misconduct by public officials.

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<sup>1</sup> The Fitzgerald Inquiry Report, Page 371,

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“Unless the Opposition can discover what has happened or is happening and give consideration to events with expert assistance, it cannot expose and criticize activities and the people involved.

“It is effectively prevented from doing its job.”

Mr Katter said the KAP holds more seats than the LNP north of the tropic of Capricorn and for it not to be provided with adequate resources to scrutinise the Government’s behaviour undermines the rights of people in North Queensland to have adequate representation.

He said the party, and its representation of rural and regional Queensland, had been a repeat victim to the State’s rules surrounding the allocation of resources to political parties.

“The allocation of party resources in this State is to this day, despite the recommendations some 30 years ago, at the discretion of the Premier and the Premier alone – this is innately unfair,” Mr Katter said.

“The KAP is acutely aware of this, having been stripped of the few Parliamentary staff we had been granted in 2015 by the Labor Government when the Premier took issue with a speech given by a former KAP Senator in the Federal Parliament.

“All KAP MPs, as well as the other crossbenchers, operate with a skeleton staff who work their hands to the bone to try and get issues solved for their constituents.

“This leaves very little capacity for the members to be able to properly scrutinise government policy and legislation.

“Meanwhile Labor and the LNP are given dozens of staff on top of each member’s electorate office staff, under their formal “government” and “opposition” office allocations. A majority of these staff are in Brisbane and focus on policy development. And we wonder why we get Brisbane centric policy outcomes..

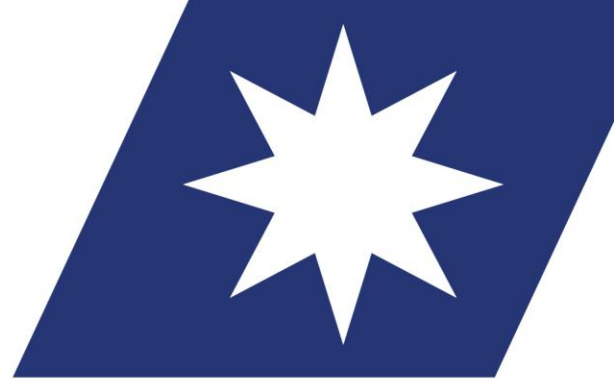
“Despite this, KAP Members continue to prioritise their constituents while fighting as hard as possible against the legislative attack on regional Queensland.

“We will keep putting in the hard yards no matter what, but it would certainly be nice to finally see some equity in the way resources are allocated to ensure all members and parties are able to serve their constituents and scrutinize Government legislation.”

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Following his investigation in relation to the Premier's conduct when withdrawing KAP staff, CCC chair Alan MacSporran QC also highlighted the unfairness of the current system. <sup>2</sup>

Mr MacSporran recommended that there be an independent, bipartisan body created within the Parliament to objectively address the matter of party resources.

"The allocation of resources to elected members of Parliament is a fundamental plank in a democratic system," he said.

"If you're interfering with the resource allocation it is a very disappointing outcome."

—ENDS—

### **Media inquiries**

Michael Serenc, 0423 108 848

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<sup>2</sup> "Premier's comments exposed her to charge of bribery, CCC says", Brisbane Times, September 27, 2019, <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/queensland/premier-s-comments-exposed-her-to-charge-of-bribery-ccc-says-20180927-p506b1.html>