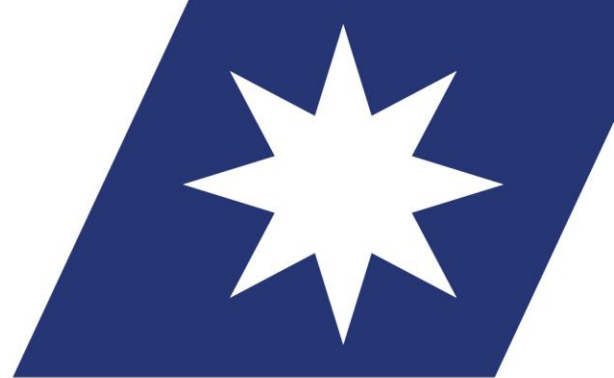


BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



MEDIA RELEASE

11 December 2019

Mission Beach GP shuts down after 25 years

STAGNANT Medicare rebates, skyrocketing rents and competitive public sector wage increases are being blamed for a medical centre in Mission Beach closing down, a town with a population of more than 6500 during peak season.

Announcing its reluctant closure this week, Mission Beach Medical Centre will see its last patient in January 2020 leaving the township with a single doctor, three days a week, and Tully, the nearest alternative.

KAP Federal Member for Kennedy Bob Katter warned that several other regional medical centres in North Queensland face a similar fate unless the State Government intervenes and reintroduces 'bonding', a concept where medical graduates must complete a term in regional and rural locations before moving to a permanent base in exchange for public-funded tuition.

Mr Katter said, "More than a hundred hours has been spent of my time on this in the last six months where there are at least another seven or eight centres with the same fate looming, and some of them are in very big towns.

"I don't think there is any way out of this except with bonding. It was there when I was a state Member of Parliament, it worked well and it has to be restored.

"Bonding costs the people a million dollars to produce a medical graduate. The graduate basically gets a gift off the Government and after they finish, they have a licence to print money by earning upward of \$150,000 each year. So if we are giving you a million dollars to pay for your tuition, then I think you should give something back in return.

"There is something seriously wrong with a system that says we must have one doctor for every thousand people. We have six thousand people at Mission Beach and we have no doctors.

"Federally, the proposition that we put to the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, was that there must be an extra \$75,000 to attract doctors out of the big cities and attract them out of the public hospital system where they are, quite frankly, being feather-bedded, and into the private system.

"I am serving warning on the Government that you are looking at dozens of towns that are at risk of closing down and I am going, cap in hand, to the Government and telling them that so far there has been no action so it has to be this or it is warfare."

Mr Katter said that despite the JCU Medical School producing 200 doctors each year, they are not keeping up with the demand in the out-of-city centres.

"We are in desperate trouble. There is not enough money to attract a doctor to work in some of these towns and the cities are far more attractive for graduates.

"Because of the amount of money you get out of the system, you can only do so many people a day. They can make much more money in the public system because the Government kicked up their pay by another \$150,000; certainly more than what they get in the private sector.

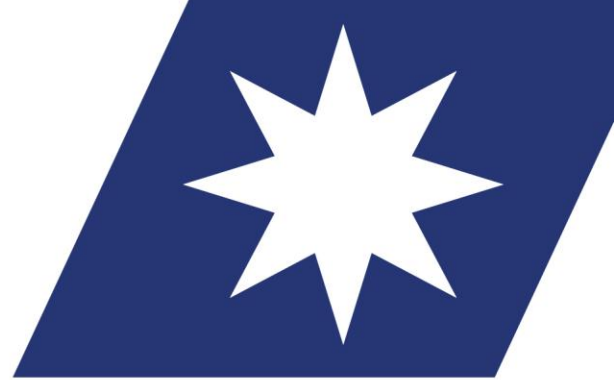
For more information or a comment from Bob Katter, please contact the media phone: 0418 840 243



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“There is a brutal abuse of public power here. You have to get a licence to get any money from Medicare and to get that licence you have to meet certain criteria. You have to do two years’ service in a public hospital. Well in years past, those two years were spent in country doctor surgeries.”

Mr Katter is sceptical that the Queensland Government will assist the struggling private sector.

“To ask the State Government to look after someone outside of Brisbane is like asking a taipan snake not to bite you.

“It is a miracle that we are asking for to get action from the State Government. But then again, it is Christmas, so maybe a Christmas miracle can happen and bonding will be restored?”

—ENDS—