

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

13 May 2022

KAP'S BLUE CARD BILL BACKED BY COMMUNITIES

Katter's Australian Party (KAP) Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter was met with a strong show of support for his Blue Card Bill when he visited Cape York communities last week.

This Bill, which is currently being considered by the Queensland Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, is designed to help stabilise some of Queensland's most vulnerable communities out of the welfare system and into meaningful employment so they can build a better future.

It's the third time Mr Katter has put his version of his Blue Card Bill through Parliament.

Mr Katter met with the Napranum, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Councils and Napranum Local Justice Group and community members last week where he discussed the re-introduction of his *Working with Children (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill 2021*, which would update the Blue Card framework.

It would allow eligible people to request that Indigenous community leaders, namely Local Justice Groups, consider certain Blue Card applications and help overcome the huge impediment of getting people into work.

"The meetings were very productive; the community leaders I met with were enthusiastic about getting these changes over the line to empower locals to work, boost their self-determination and make valuable contributions to their communities, and help to reunite and solidify the family unit," Mr Katter said.

The proposed changes would also go a long way in alleviating the youth crime crisis gripping North Queensland by keeping young people off the streets.

"To get kids off the street and back home with their families, you need to stabilise the family unit with meaningful employment," Mr Katter said, adding that all policy-makers needed to be on board.

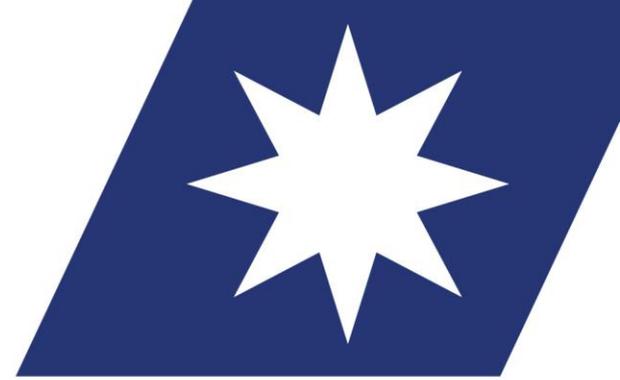
"But the effort needs to come from all levels on government for such a big issue."

Any person with a history of child-related or sexual offending, or any other disqualifying offence, would not be able to utilise the Blue Card framework, and child safety would remain paramount.

But Mr Katter said the Blue Card assessment extended far beyond criminal history associated with children; unlawful use of a motor vehicle was considered a serious offence under the current rules,

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meaning a person who was in trouble with the law as a teenager may not be able to secure a job and turn their life around many years later.

“In Indigenous communities where job opportunities are scarce and almost all jobs require Blue Cards, this knock-back can be tragic,” Mr Katter said.

Queensland Government data showed that while people who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander accounted for five percent of total Blue Card applicants, they made up 22 per cent of the rejected applications in 2017-2020.

The Bill is currently going through the committee phase and a report on the proposed changes will be delivered by the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee by the end of 2022.

KAP Candidate for Leichhardt Rod Jensen said the KAP was asking for communities to claim some control of the Blue Card system to help people who had a “scuffle on the street” 15 years ago to secure appropriate work.

He said there were currently 34 jobs with Aurukun Shire Council working on infrastructure like sewage plants that may require a Blue Card, ruling out many people who needed the work.

“What we’re asking for those communities to take back a little bit of the Blue Card system to say maybe that person has a black mark but we understand that in the last 10, 20 years that person is now a very reliable and supported person in the community and we see they would be more than valuable within our community work,” he said.

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