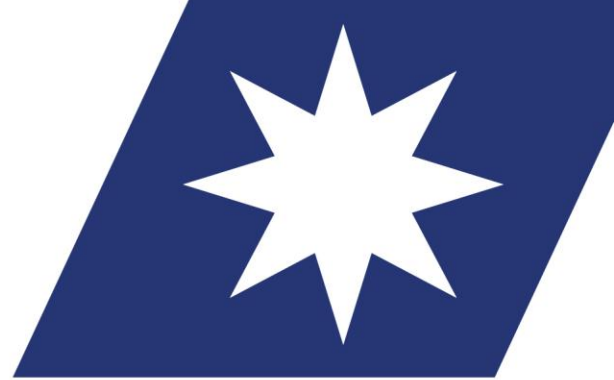


**ROBBIE KATTER**

**Member for Traeger**

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## MEDIA RELEASE



28 August, 2020

# *ACCELERATE THE NORTH WEST*

## KATTER THROWS HAT BACK IN THE RING

KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter has today formally announced his bid for re-election as the Member for Traeger, outlining key priorities to resuscitate the electorate's economy and build a safer and stronger future for the people of Traeger.

Mr Katter said he was committed to putting Traeger in the driving seat when it came to bolstering the economy in the wake of COVID-19, with key investments in water, power, health and living affordability.

He said the KAP was eyeing a very powerful position in the Queensland Parliament come polling day on 31 October, and that if re-elected he would put the people of Traeger first wherever possible.

"The major parties have been heavily-criticised for their lack of a COVID economic recovery plan, but the KAP is ahead of the game and has already mapped out a robust strategy to fuel huge growth in Traeger," he said.

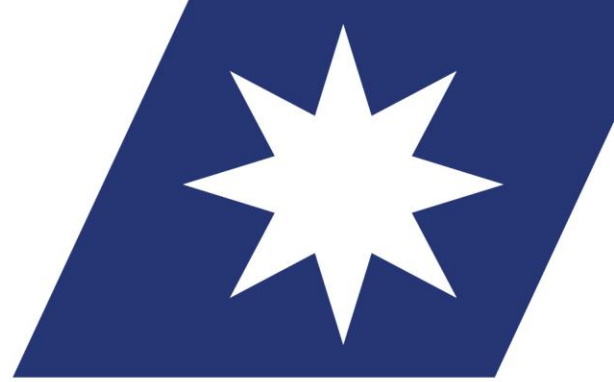
If it wins the balance of power the KAP plans to establish a North Queensland Future Fund, financed by the State Government's \$5 billion Queensland Future Fund, to identify and build major infrastructure projects in the North.

Mr Katter's other key priorities for Traeger include:

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### **Water**

Mr Katter is committed to continuing the fight for water security solutions in Traeger, recognising North Queensland's potential for irrigated agriculture to grow high-value crops to support industry, drought-proof the region and create jobs.

The KAP, through Federal Member for Kennedy Bob Katter, secured \$250 million for major water infrastructure priorities Hell's Gates Dam (revised Bradfield Scheme), Big Rocks Weir and HIPCo.

The Hell's Gates project would support large-scale irrigated agriculture and hydro-power generation on the Upper Burdekin River, creating tens of thousands of jobs and drought-proofing the region.

"Hell's Gates Dam and Big Rocks Weir (Stage One) is the most logical and viable water security solution for North Queensland. Pound for pound, Hell's Gates offers a hell of a lot more than any other water storage scheme," Robbie Katter said.

The project would receive funding under the KAP's proposed North Queensland Future Fund.

### **Power**

CopperString 2.0 is a key election priority for Mr Katter to connect constituents in the North West Minerals Province to the National Electricity Market.

It will supply customers with electricity and offer new opportunities for large-scale agricultural and renewable energy projects. Following extensive lobbying, the State Government recently pledged \$14.8 million to the project.

Currently, the North does not generate its own power and is beholden to the State Government to subsidise the exorbitant costs of transporting power up from Gladstone.

Mr Katter said the generation of reliable and affordable power in the North was desperately needed to facilitate plans for large-scale mining and industrial and manufacturing development the

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KAP wanted to achieve in places like Traeger, Hill and Hinchinbrook and across North Queensland more broadly.

Combined with large-scale hydro-electricity generated from Hell's Gates Dam, Mr Katter said coal-fired power was the answer to Queensland's energy future.

### **Roads**

Robbie is committed to ensuring the completion of local road projects including:

- Sealing the Hann Highway – A game-changer for transporting freight between NQ and southern states. It would reduce travel distance between FNQ and Melbourne by 500km. State and Federal Governments have agreed a further 50km of the Hann would be sealed between Etheridge and Flinders Shires.
- Fully sealing the Torrens Creek-Aramac Road – State and Federal Governments have pledged \$30 million to fully seal the road and construct Prairie Creek bridge by mid-2022. This will offer an all-weather alternate inland route from Cairns to Melbourne.
- Sealing the road from Georgetown to Forsayth to support high tourist traffic to Cobbold Gorge.
- Progressing works on an access road to the Lawn Hill Gorge, Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park to take pressure off the heavily-used road and maintain the booming tourist industry (approximately 40,000 tourists a year).
- Installing more over-taking lanes on the highly-congested parts of the Flinders Highway between Charters Towers and Townsville.

### **Crime**

The KAP has extensively outlined its plan for a third avenue for justice to be applied when dealing with youth offenders, known as Relocation Sentencing.

The establishment of this policy could facilitate a purpose-built, State Government-owned camp constructed at Kajabbi, outside Mount Isa, that would house children as they completed this alternative form of sentencing.

The Relocation Sentencing concept was designed to enable youth offenders to develop key life skills such as trade and agricultural work.

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The centre at Kajabbi, and potentially others across the state depending on demand, would operate in close co-operation with Indigenous Elders and professional youth workers to ensure young offenders had the best shot possible at a productive and crime-free future.

Importantly, it would remove the offenders from the communities they had previously targeted and also from the negative influences that led to their criminality.

Mr Katter said he would also lobby extensively for the retention of the region's current police numbers, and would push for the permanent deployment of more officers in crime hotspots like Mount Isa and Normanton.

### **Health**

Bettering the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders in the Traeger electorate is another central re-election commitment.

Mr Katter has identified resolving Traeger's hidden health emergency and addressing the chronic underfunding of dialysis services for rural patients as an urgent priority.

Despite a \$4.8 million investment in Townsville University Hospital's renal unit, which funded an extra 13 dialysis chairs, critically-unwell patients in rural towns across the North were still being forced to travel hundreds of kilometres to Townsville for life-saving care.

Ongoing negotiations for dialysis services in Charters Towers have gone unresolved, and Mount Isa is still 15 chairs short.

"This is now an acute problem that is sacrificing lives right now; there are people saying, 'I'd rather not travel to Townsville every day, I'd rather sit here and die'," Mr Katter said.

"If this was a problem in Brisbane, it would be resolved tomorrow."

Mr Katter has called on both State and Federal Governments to fast-track funding to the Charters Towers Hospital for "market-ready" priority projects including a satellite dialysis unit, CT scanner and the refurbishment of the Eventide Aged Care Facility.

If funded, the works, estimated to be approximately \$8 million, could be completed by 2021 and create 41 jobs, injecting about \$13 million into the local Charters Towers economy.

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The projects form part of a proposed \$172.1 million investment in Charters Towers health services, with a \$164 million rebuild of the Charters Towers Hospital planned over the next four years.

“This will bring Charters Towers into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and vastly improve the quality of life for constituents in the region including Pentland, Homestead, Hughenden, Richmond and Greenvale,” Mr Katter said.

### **Flying foxes**

Mr Katter had previously criticised the woefully-weak State Government’s flying fox codes of practice, and also resigned from the Charters Towers Flying Fox Advisory Committee earlier this year in response to its inaction.

Despite this, he continued to maintain close relationships with the Charters Towers Regional and Mount Isa City Councils as they navigated their respective flying fox issues.

Mr Katter would continue to lobby on behalf of the councils and was also working to correct legislation that unfairly impacted local communities’ ability to deal with unwanted bats.

“Charters Towers is cold, hard proof of the failed handling of flying fox infestations, with roosts exceeding 250,000 animals at times,” Mr Katter said.

“The State Government restricts handling of the animals through legislation and codes that are ultimately unworkable, but then shifts blame to under-resourced and inexperienced Local Governments.”

Mr Katter said he was determined to ensure the financial impost of dealing with long-term flying fox roosts was not repeatedly forced onto councils.

### **Airfare and fuel prices**

Access to fair and reliable fuel and airfare prices for rural and remote communities is another re-election priority for Mr Katter.

He has vowed to keep achieving wins in his unrelenting fight against astronomical air travel costs and fuel prices in Traeger communities.

Earlier this year, steps forward were taken in the fight against exorbitant airfares with the Queensland Transport Minister’s announcement of a price-tracking tool to keep tabs on regional

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airfares and help monitor affordability. Mr Katter said this was the first step in lobbying for change on these unrelenting costs.

Furthermore, Mr Katter is committed to continuing his successes in tackling price gouging at the fuel bowser in Traeger communities.

“For far too long, regional, rural and remote Queenslanders in the Traeger electorate have been paying substantially more for fuel than the rest of the state, a problem that has only worsened due to the dive in oil prices as a result of the COVID-19 crisis,” Mr Katter said.

He highlighted Mount Isa’s appalling rank by the RACQ earlier this year as the most expensive regional centre to fill up the tank, with an average of 149 cents per litre for unleaded petrol, compared to approximately a dollar per litre in Brisbane.

As a result of Mr Katter’s and the community’s lobbying, the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources acknowledged the fuel price discrepancies and inequities and called on the ACCC to urgently investigate, resulting in the ACCC pressuring retailers to pass on decreases in international petrol prices to consumers.

### **Indigenous communities**

The KAP, under Mr Katter’s leadership, has previously outlined a five-point plan for improving the lives of Queensland’s First Australians. This includes those living in Traeger’s remote Indigenous communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island.

These key priorities are:

1. Addressing title deed issues in Aboriginal communities (at present people cannot own homes in places like Doomadgee).
2. Breaking down barriers for First Australians accessing work due to Blue Card system overreach and other systemic issues.
3. Immediately acting on youth crime across the state, by circuit-breaking the current cycle and amending the Youth Justice Act where needed (including enacting Relocation Sentencing as an alternative option).
4. Moving to control the cost of food and groceries in Indigenous communities (where goods are often double the cost of regional centres).

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5. Analysing, acknowledging and addressing the failings of the state's Alcohol Management Plans (AMP), which have in most instances negatively impacted local health outcomes and safety in these communities rather than improve them.

Mr Katter said he would be honoured to be re-elected as the Member for Traeger for a fourth term, and said the best was yet to come for the North West.

**—ENDS—**

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