

Queensland Parliament Hansard Green


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SUBJECT: CopperString 2.0

MEMBER: Mr KATTER

CopperString 2.0

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (7.07 pm): I refer to the CopperString 2.0 project that is desperately needed in the North West Minerals Province. It is very important for the House to acknowledge that with inaction nothing happens. If nothing happens in the context of the North West Minerals Province, it will be akin to the Australian car industry. If we sit back complacently and say, 'Oh well, there is not much we can do,' we will awake in 20 years to find it gone. I not saying it will collapse tomorrow. This is a dreadful issue to report to the House, but I refer to some of the highest energy prices in the world. One mining company at its board meeting referred to some of the African basket case countries where the price for electricity is over \$100 a megawatt hour. The minimum price in Mount Isa is \$150 a megawatt hour. Under the NEM, it is \$50 to \$60 an hour. We in Mt Isa pay three times the energy price of what others pay to access the grid. The gas provider has a monopoly.

CopperString involves a \$20 million input from the government in terms of the construction phase right now. That unlocks a \$1.5 billion investment. The taxpayer need not do any heavy lifting as that will be done by the mining companies, but we need that \$20 million. In a few months, it is no good saying, 'That is a pity, someone else should have come up with that money.' Governments are supposed to drive these projects. People look to us to make these projects happen. It behoves the government to make this happen. We need that \$20 million.

Right now, there are thousands of Townsville jobs, in Mount Isa and the north-west that will in the future be compromised if the government fails to invest. This is all based on my discussions with multiple mining companies. New Century said that represents a small operation in the North West Minerals Province. Build the CopperString. It would represent \$30-\$60 million in extra royalties to the state government. That is pretty easy maths. The early estimate is that a \$20 million state government investment in CopperString equates to a \$30 billion return.

053 What do we do? Do we sit around and wait and hope that someone else comes up with the money, or does the government take charge—and I hope the government does this—and says that it is going to build this and it will get behind it? I do not mind if the government takes over the project and owns it itself, because it needs to be done. It is embarrassing that, with our rich mineral province, which will be there for the next 100 years, if we are to be competitive it cannot do it with its arms behind its back. People are paying \$150 a megawatt hour and up to \$200 a megawatt hour when it can decrease those power prices by 30 per cent to 40 per cent. Guess how much cost there will be to the taxpayer? Nothing, apart from that \$20 million to set up a \$1.5 billion investment. It must be done for the sake of Mount Isa and Townsville.