

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

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PORTS BAN A BLOW TO LIVE EXPORT TRADE

A knee-jerk decision by the State Labor Government to implement a blanket shut down of all Queensland ports to foreign ships until they go through a two-week quarantine period could see North Queensland lose millions of dollars from the local live export industry.

Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MPs have called out Maritime Safety Queensland's (MSQ's) decision, which will exclude all foreign ships from pilotage areas at Queensland ports until 14 days has elapsed since leaving their last international port due to concerns over COVID-19, as an over-reach.

It follows discussions today between the KAP and Townsville feedlot and export operator Py Porter, who manages Kellys Yards, Queensland Livestock Exporters' Association president Greg Pankhurst, Frontier International managing director Will McEwin and Frontier logistics operator Tom Emery.

State KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said there were fears Queensland's live export market would be severely impacted at a time when economic stability across all sectors was desperately needed.

"The North's live export trade is facing an extremely dire situation as a result of this blanket ban," said Mr Katter said.

"Live export is a critical part of the supply chain in northern Australia and the middle of this year will see a lot of producers looking for markets to sell cattle as the grass is minimal.

"This decision is going to mean that areas such as Cloncurry and Mount Isa will be sending cattle to Darwin as a result of this blanket quarantine policy, with North Queensland losing out on millions of dollars."

KAP Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto said there was no reason why MSQ could not adopt Darwin's approach to commercial vessels, which instead of imposing a quarantine has implemented measures that restrict the crew from disembarking.

"Persons loading cattle from the docks and the people on those vessels do not meet each other anyway, so Darwin's measures make far more sense. Restrict the crew from disembarking and you've already minimised the chances of COVID-19 spreading through human-to-human contact," he said.

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“With the current air travel restrictions in place also impacting box meat supply to places like Indonesia and Vietnam, there is already an increased demand for Australian live export.

“But if our customers can’t access our ports in a timely manner, Queensland is going to miss the boat.

“Graziers have been doing it tough for too many years and all of a sudden an economic opportunity is here for them to capitalise on, all they need is for the government to get out of the way and let them do business.

“One cattleman we’ve spoken to fears the live export market will crash because of these port restrictions with little to no consultation by the State Government.”

“I understand there is a vessel due to come into Townsville early next month, which means they would have to hold offshore empty for the 14-day quarantine costing a significant amount of money in carrier fees per seven day waiting period. This is unacceptable,” Mr Katter said.

“Think about the knock-on effects to the industry chain, such as hay suppliers, fodder suppliers, vets, consumables from local agribusiness stores and cattle agents.

“The state needs to remove this restriction and the Federal Government should immediately classify the cattle supply chain as an essential industry. We cannot afford to lose it.”

—ENDS—

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