

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

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KAP CALLS FOR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER START-UPS

Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MPs have today reacted with anger and despair to the news that dozens of regional and rural community newspapers in Queensland will close, as the nation's largest news outlet moves to a primarily digital model of publishing.

Executive Chairman of News Corp Australasia Mr Michael Miller announced this morning that all its regional titles, including small community papers vital to KAP MPs' electorates such as *The Northern Miner*, *Herbert River Express* and the *Atherton Tablelander*, would be moved to digital only.

News Corp will, however, continue to publish its major regional titles - *The Hobart Mercury*, *NT News*, *Cairns Post*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *Toowoomba Chronicle* and *Geelong Advertiser* – both digitally and in print.

KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said today's decision had sent shockwaves across Queensland, and would undoubtedly have a disproportionate impact on rural and regional communities where the local 'rag' was a vital source of community information and connectedness.

"To have these local papers ripped away from us just breaks your heart, and it draws a line in the sand between city and country in terms of where the big corporations are willing to invest their dollars," Mr Katter said.

"We are not dinosaurs, and accept the world is moving online but to get your news via a link is certainly no substitute for an actual newspaper that is curated and tailored for its readership.

"The big concern here also is jobs – there are some really great journalists working out in the regions who perform vital roles on so many levels.

"We are yet to learn what this means for those people, but to say we are concerned is an understatement."

Mr Katter said it was "tragic" that the days when a parent could open up the local paper and cut out a photo of their son or daughter excelling at community support would soon be a thing of the past.

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He said the KAP was keen to be part of a solution to ensure rural and regional towns were still serviced properly by news providers, and believes there could be a role for the State Government to play in this regard.

KAP MPs have also recently been in discussions with media figures interested in establishing independent news services in small towns in the North.

"Following the news today, we are now hoping to speed up these discussions to see what is workable in line with what else is being offered," he said.

"I am conscious that the *North West Star*, which is published in my electorate out in Mount Isa, is due to return to printing in the coming months and I am certainly looking forward to that."

In his statement to the media this morning, Mr Miller signalled the growth of digital news consumption, and profits, was at the heart of News Corp's decision.

"(To meet) changing trends, we are reshaping News Corp Australia to focus on where consumers and businesses are moving and to strengthen our position as Australia's leading digital news media company," he said

"This will involve employing more digital only journalists and making investments in digital advertising and marketing solutions for our partners

"Commercially, these portfolio changes will make News Corp less complex for its partners to leverage and will build on the innovations it already has in place."

The KAP is keen to engage with independent news providers who may be interested in starting up an alternative news service for small towns that have been impacted by today's announcement.

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