

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

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PUBLIC SERVANTS TO PLUG VOLUNTEER VOID: KAP

Strategically-placed public servants would be offered time in lieu to volunteer at kids sporting clubs, under a two-fold "Fight Back for Community Sports" plan announced today by Katter's Australian Party.

KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said the plan would apply primarily to regional areas and would draw on workers in departments like DATSIP, Department of Child Safety and Youth Justice. Police liaison officers may also be suitable.

Mr Katter said the plan would provide avenues for keeping troubled youth off the streets while supporting community sports clubs, and other youth groups, that have been on life support since the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"Community sports have been under threat for years, there's always more costs and overheads to be paid but less volunteers and less money in the pot to draw from," he said.

"This threat keeps increasing due mainly to a lack of volunteers and the loss of any of these clubs and organisations undoubtedly leaves a large hole in the community fabric of regional cities and rural towns.

"Importantly sports and other community clubs play a vital role in keeping troubled youth occupied, and passionate about something, thus playing a pivotal role in stemming youth crime."

"We are not asking for over-time payments or more money from the state's coffers, which we know are essentially bare at this time.

"Instead this policy, which is a moving concept and something we plan to speak to the government about in Brisbane this week, is a temporary re-direction of departmental workers who are already tasked with activities in youth engagement and youth crime.

"The criticism is often made that too many people in these jobs spend too much time in the office and not enough time engaging with people and kids on the ground – well, here is your solution."

The KAP proposes that the State Government invite regional sports clubs, and other youth organisations, who are in desperate need of volunteers to register their demonstrated need.

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Following this, demand would be cross-referenced with the possible supply of public servants who are able to provide assistance.

Up to four hours a week could be expected from a volunteer, and this would be paid back to the employee as time in lieu or similar.

Mr Katter said there were further elements of the plan to be decided upon, including the need for strong conditions to be put in place in place to stop rorting.

“The purpose of this plan is to give these sports clubs the urgent help they need to re-open and operate, and provide a bit of normality for young people,” he said.

“On top of this, we want to see public servants engage more heavily in activities that they should be participating in as part of their roles anyway.

“I can refer to a case in point in my electorate with the Mount Isa Junior Rugby League Club, for example.

“This club is one of the biggest child-care services in Mount Isa for two afternoons training and one game per week, but it has one of lowest participation rates of parents and is currently highly-stretched for resources.

“Why not get some of these people out of their offices and engaging with these kids and helping out ailing community sports at the same time?

“Clubs can make applications to the government to register if they demonstrate a need.

“Brisbane clubs may be right with their large catchment area for volunteers, but we are struggling out in the regions.”

Mr Katter said the volunteer drive would be a great accompaniment to the Palaszczuk Labor Government’s \$150 Fair Play vouchers, announced last week.

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