

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

29 March, 2021

CALLOUS COMMERCIAL DECISION A BLOW TO THE WEST: KAP

Western Queensland has been effectively cut off from the rest of the state following a dramatic decision by Australia's largest print news organisation, Katter's Australian Party Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter has said.

News Corp Australia, which publishes Queensland's "state newspaper" *The Courier Mail* as well the *Townsville Bulletin* and various other mastheads, recently wrote to regional and rural news agents advising the company would end distribution to most western communities from September 26.

It's understood distribution will cease to towns further west than Charters Towers in the North, Emerald in central Queensland and also in some parts of the state's south-west.

Mr Katter said the decision was akin to abandonment, and would leave most western communities without access to a daily newspaper covering state, national and international affairs.

"This decision is an absolute blow not only to the newsagents, who remain one of our last bastions of free enterprise out in the bush, but also to every single person who calls these towns home," he said.

"It is one of the most callous commercial decisions I have seen in a long time, and to be honest I am still in disbelief.

"The digital platform, for various reasons, is no substitute for real newspapers.

"There are a lot of issues out here that impede people's willingness or ability to access digital news and then of course there is the issue of misinformation, which is rife online."

Mr Katter said while he understood and empathised with the commercial pressure being faced by traditional publishers, a degree of social responsibility had to be observed.

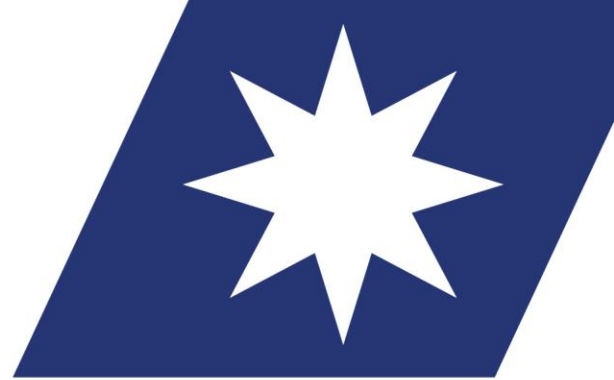
He said the State Government had also been negligent in this realm, and pointed to new Labor legislation that would move public notices from newspapers to digital sites.

Currently Queensland Government departments are required to publish official notices, like new mining leases or amendments to a land use plan, in print newspapers.

However the Palaszczuk Government is seeking to reverse this rule and require that notices be published only on departmental websites or on online news sites.

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Speaking to the *Brisbane Times* last week, Queensland Treasurer Cameron Dick said the move was designed to save the Government money.¹

“For some years now, the overwhelming majority of Queenslanders have sourced most of their information from online publications,” he said to the *Brisbane Times*.

“Queenslanders should have the same access to information wherever they live, and many regional communities are no longer serviced by regular print publications.”

Mr Katter said the State Government’s plans would rip vital revenue away from those newspapers that do still operate in the regions.

“When this is the view of our leaders, what hope have we got out here?” he said.

“The Government - and now our largest print news publisher News Corp - could not make it any clearer that if you don’t live on or near the coast, you basically aren’t worth their time.”

—ENDS—

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¹ <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/queensland/paper-cuts-qld-government-to-axe-compulsory-print-media-advertising-20210322-p57d1m.html>