

**KATTER'S  
AUSTRALIAN  
PARTY**

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**DANIEL MCCARTHY**  
**Candidate for Leichhardt**



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## **Last straw for Cape cattle industry**

The destocking of a major breeding property, Merapah, west of Coen by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) was the last straw for the cattle industry in Far North Queensland.

Katter's Australian Party candidate for Leichardt Dan McCarthy, the former owner of Merapah Station, John Witherspoon and Federal MP Bob Katter have urged the Federal Government to step in to prevent the loss of any more cattle from Cape York Peninsula.

"The Federal Government could pull the ILC into line if it had the will. Instead the Federal member just makes noises."

State KAP leader Robbie Katter said he had been informed of the destocking of Merapah and Bulimba some time ago and would raise the matter with the Premier but did not believe the State Government would intervene given their commitment to creating a World Heritage estate across the Peninsula.

"I have been following the loss of the cattle on Cape York and this will be the end of the cattle industry because the ILC are the largest remaining stock holders and one of the largest land owners left," Mr McCarthy said.

"Sure, they said they want to give the properties back to indigenous corporations, but these vast cattle properties have been stocked for the past 100 years or more and removing cattle overnight adds to the economic and environmental devastation for the area."

"At a time when job opportunities in Cape York towns and in indigenous communities is so low, why is the government allowing destocking of cattle on the peninsula?" "Just like National parks a lot of the land has gone from being job and income producing assets to expensive liabilities overrun with feral animals and weeds. Along with the Wild Rivers, Veg laws and tight water regulations, these draconian laws deliberately stifle any potential growth in the North."

"The southern half of Queensland and all of NSW is reeling in drought so why not extend freight rebates to send drought-affected stock north on agistment instead of trying to find expensive hay and grain to keep cattle alive?"

"We are failing to use our assets in the North".



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Weipa grazier John Witherspoon said his family sold the 414,000-hectare Merapah to the Federal Government in 1989 after 90 years of ownership by the Keppell family.

“The property is one of the better places on the Peninsula and is capable of running 15,000 breeders or more if extra water points are put in and destocking will just turn the place into a jungle in a few years,” Mr Witherspoon explained.

“Handing it over to the descendants of Wompee Keppell without cattle is a waste of time because they will have no income to maintain the place or any ability to stay there.

“It will end up like all the other cattle properties handed to indigenous people that now have almost no management and breed feral animals and weeds instead of cattle.

Mr Witherspoon said there were a number of excellent grazing properties in the Weipa district which could take up to 30,000 head of cattle for agistment which would keep alive core breeding herds of Central and Western Queensland.

“There is York Downs, Batavia, Merluna, Wolverton and Billys Lagoon as well as the conservation property Piccaninny, which could handle many thousands of cattle to give producers a break and create a more jobs up here.

“The Peninsula is one of the most reliable rainfall areas in Australia and locking it all up into national parks has already caused a big loss to the state economy.”

“This looks like the end of the cattle industry on the Peninsula now. There are only about 12 grazing properties left on the greater Peninsula and their future looks bad.

“This is the last straw.”

—ENDS—

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