




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.01 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Treasurer's 2015 budget and to congratulate him on a wonderful job in delivering his first budget. His great stewardship and his hard work in steering this state back in the right direction should be acknowledged. Again, I congratulate him on a job well done. This budget will restore funding for vital services, create new jobs and deliver infrastructure for the people of my electorate of Thuringowa. This budget brings back the fairness and hope that the people of Queensland lost under the previous LNP government.

On 31 January, the people of Thuringowa—in fact, the people of Queensland—voted to return Labor to form a new government. Not only did they vote Labor to form government but also they provided Labor and the Palaszczuk government with a mandate that would see important revenue raising and government owned assets like the Port of Townsville, the Townsville-Mount Isa rail link and Ergon Energy remain in the hands of the people of Queensland and remain in their hands for many generations to come. These assets raise significant funds to help build and maintain our hospitals, schools and roads and help fund our vital front-line services such as police, fire and ambulance.

The Palaszczuk government received this mandate and heard the voices of the voters loud and clear. In return, this government gave a strong commitment to the people of Queensland that, under Labor, responsible and measured debt reduction would be the key to governing our great state whilst at the same time proactively ensuring that the needs of all Queenslanders were adequately met. This budget ensures that key infrastructure spending is being undertaken in core areas of government such as health, education and transport and doing so without needing to sell government owned assets to pay for it and in a way that is balanced, measured and fiscally responsible.

I feel very confident in saying that this budget appropriately funds our core areas of government whilst also securing much needed growth and prosperity and, more importantly, increased productivity in many diverse and much needed areas such as tourism or in new and innovative industries such as the proposed biofuels industry. These areas will provide not only much needed jobs for Queenslanders but also a significant boost of funds for Queensland Treasury. This budget provides us with a strong opportunity to build a better Queensland for the future.

In Townsville and Thuringowa, significant funding has been put aside to improve our local health services—\$804.6 million of significant funding, to be exact. As a former paramedic, and having worked closely within the health sector, I have a very keen interest in seeing our local health services not only maintained but also improved. I am very pleased to see that key areas of our local health services, such as acute mental health services, are getting the much needed attention they deserve. Importantly, it is great to see this budget restore nurse-to-patient ratios, which ensures the safety of our patients who use our health services. I, along with the constituents of the Thuringowa electorate, should feel comforted in the knowledge that our current health needs are being well looked after in this budget and that our future health needs are also being adequately catered for as well.

Once again, I commend this budget again for addressing many of the transport concerns in the Thuringowa electorate. An amount of \$75 million has been allocated to progress the construction of stage 4 of the Townsville Ring Road. This vital piece of road infrastructure will traverse 11 kilometres of my electorate and provides a new motorway bypass for the Bruce Highway around the city of Townsville. It connects our fast-growing northern beaches suburbs to major infrastructure such as the Townsville Hospital and James Cook University. It will also provide greater connectivity to our thriving business, retail and community hub that is Thuringowa Central.

An amount of \$10.5 million has also been allocated in our local community to complete the construction of the Dalrymple Road Bridge. Prior to that funding being allocated, the people of Deeragun and those nearby in the fast-growing residential subdivisions of Kalynda Chase and Greater Ascot could not cross this particular section of the Bohle River in the wet season owing to the existing crossing being regularly inundated by flooding. The completion of the Dalrymple Road Bridge will mean that residents of those areas can continue to have a direct and reliable road link to the Townsville CBD via Dalrymple Road in future wet seasons. This bridge will help improve road capacity along Dalrymple Road to cater for the fast residential growth that is currently underway on the western side of the Bohle River.

Education infrastructure has also been given a significant boost in the Thuringowa and northern beaches area, with \$10 million being set aside to commence the development of two new state schools in the fast-growing area of the northern suburbs. That investment should total a whopping \$90 million over the next four years and will see the completion of both a state and secondary school. Another significant education investment for Thuringowa is \$135,000 set aside for the Weir State School, which will be used to complete the expansion and build a new storage area for their multipurpose hall. This strong investment in infrastructure shows that this is a government that is listening and addressing the concerns of the people of Thuringowa and that this is a government that is catering to the needs of Queenslanders.

Of course, these projects also serve another purpose. These are projects that create jobs. We had a situation where the previous LNP government promised Queenslanders that it would reduce unemployment to four per cent. But, of course, that promise turned out to be nothing more than an untruth that was made by he who shall not be named. This government is committed to building jobs for the future and with a solid budget and plan that includes the reintroduction of the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, that means that many of the major projects that I have discussed today will create new job opportunities for the people of the Thuringowa electorate and new job opportunities for Queenslanders.

I am excited because of the significant government investment that is being made in Thuringowa. New-found confidence and certainty is being developed in the private sector of the Thuringowa electorate and the broader Townsville community. With this new-found economic confidence and certainty comes momentum in the form of significant private sector investment in Thuringowa's future. I would like to share with members of the House some examples of that momentum, resulting in significant private investment that is currently planned or now underway in Thuringowa. Recently, Wingate announced the building of a \$500 million residential development in the Thuringowa electorate. I congratulate Wingate on its investment in that area. I know that Wingate will build a great community, comprised of 1,400 homes. Such investment is the shot in the arm that is needed in Thuringowa as it creates new jobs in construction and drives further investment in the region.

Our retail sector is also going strong, with Dexus investing \$90 million to expand and redevelop the Willows Shopping Centre. Again, this development helps to create more jobs in the building, retail and hospitality sectors. It also helps drive further investment and business confidence in Thuringowa. All of that, along with the recent announcement of the establishment of a new Catholic primary school in the Thuringowa electorate, shows that the engine room of Thuringowa is well and truly humming. I congratulate the various private sector businesses for investing in Thuringowa, for instilling further confidence in our community and for creating new job opportunities that were noticeably absent over the past three years. Importantly, I believe that local business confidence has lifted itself off the mat after the battering it took over the past three years. That local business confidence is being restored because, put simply, business believes that a return to good government brings renewed economic certainty, jobs and prosperity.

Good government needs a good budget and a good budget includes a plan to create new jobs, stimulate growth in our economy and provide new economic opportunities for all Queenslanders. I believe that the Palaszczuk government has demonstrated that it is honouring the commitments that it made to the people of Queensland in its first few months of government. This budget demonstrates that the Palaszczuk government will continue to honour those commitments well into the future. I again congratulate Treasurer Pitt on a job well done and I commend the budget to the House.