



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2015

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**National Rugby League Grand Final**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (11.46 am): It is great to get up today and talk about the best thing to happen in North Queensland in recent times. You can see that I have ditched the Maroons tie for the new Cowboys tie, and I think that should be the uniform for all members. In case you have not heard, but I am sure you have, on Sunday, 4 October, with just seconds to go, history was made during the National Rugby League grand final game between two great Queensland teams: the Brisbane Broncos and the mighty North Queensland Cowboys. What happened in the dying seconds of what is likely to go down as the best NRL grand final ever played was indeed something special—so special, in fact, that I think the good Lord above would not have seen that coming.

That two Queensland teams were in Sydney for the grand final was in itself history making, and let us hope this piece of sporting history can be rewritten in future years. What this win means to North Queensland goes well beyond the footy field. It brings not only celebration but a sense of positivity to North Queensland, from Weipa and remote areas up in the cape like Thursday Island back along the coast, passing through major centres like Cairns and every town along the way to the beautiful islands, and I reckon even down through to Gladstone and perhaps even below and out west to Longreach and Mount Isa and back along the Flinders Highway to Townsville—which of course is now home to the premiership-winning North Queensland Cowboys.

There were some very important and well-timed words said by co-captain Johnathan Thurston on the big stage as he accepted that premiership trophy with fellow legend and co-captain Matt 'Thumper' Scott, and they were that Townsville deserves a new stadium right in the city.

With that, I believe that the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, raised his hand in acknowledgement. The Prime Minister would know that Townsville has spoken as he, even being in Canberra or Sydney, should have been able to hear the thousands of passionate, loyal, patient and excited fans yelling at the top of their voices whilst waiting at the airport: 'Stadium! Stadium! Stadium!' Not only did they yell it there; the crowd back at the old 1300SMILES Stadium swelled to some 16,000 fans who again joined the chant when I joined the member for Townsville, Scott Stewart, and member for Mundingburra, Coralee O'Rourke. The message was absolutely deafening as they repeated that 'Stadium!' chant.

Thousands of loyal fans of the beloved North Queensland Cowboys have waited patiently for our club to grow. They produced some great home-grown talent along the way—from the early days, like the inaugural captain, Laurie Spina, a cane farmer from Ingham who led out the team in 1995, or Matty 'Mango' Bowen from Abergowrie up Hope Vale way, to those match-winning Townsville lads schooled at Iggy Park college at Townsville: Michael Morgan and that other legend who placed the try to level the scores with just seconds to go, Kyle Feldt.

Those loyal fans have waited long enough for a new stadium, but it is more than that. It will be an integrated stadium that will deliver jobs to over a thousand locals. It will also create the priority development area, one that will attract momentum for investment and even more jobs for Townsville. And it will be the new, modern home to the 2015 premiers, the North Queensland Cowboys. The grand final Rugby League trophy has a new home, and it is North Queensland. From the Foley Shield to the NRL premiership-winning Cowboys, Rugby League has evolved, and it comes from those living in the north.

This win is something special. From those doing it tough in drought conditions out west on the land to those sweating it out and working hard along the coast on the sand, this is just the shot in the arm that everyone sure did need. Those Cowboys did not let us down and did not give up, even if it nearly finished them or made them bleed. Now there is talk that a humble Johnathan Thurston might join Townsville mayor Jenny Hill to go to see the new Prime Minister and get in his ear, for it is a new stadium that Townsville would like a federal commitment on some time this year.

This major piece of infrastructure will bring so much for all the north: jobs, prosperity, important economic development and—who knows?—perhaps another premiership going forth. I am sure every parliamentarian in the House would join me in congratulating the Cowboys on their magnificent achievement.