




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Queensland Nickel

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.46 pm): I rise today to update the House on the situation in Townsville following the administrator's report into QNI to recommend liquidation of the company. Tomorrow, 22 April, will see the second creditors meeting where no doubt discussions will be had and a vote taken on whether to liquidate the company. We know at the very core of this are local Townsville families that are doing it extremely tough. Recently there was a QNI community forum hosted by radio personality Alan Jones. On that point, it took local state members, community workers and a fellow of Alan Jones's stature to put the problem of the fair entitlements guarantee in the national spotlight—something our Premier had written to the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull requesting be activated in February. I am glad that has finally happened. We heard directly from families at that forum whose banks were foreclosing on their homes. I hear families are now selling their belongings in a desperate attempt to keep their piece of Australia. I know of schools in Thuringowa where parents in affected families have come in asking for assistance to keep their children in those schools. Of course, those schools must carry the weight of the assistance by waiving school fees and levies for textbook hire and other costs. These families have endured enough. Last week I was at the Bohle industrial area visiting the great volunteers from NQ Food Relief led by a champion bloke, Mr Brad Webb. They are putting out thousands of food packages weekly to meet the increase in demand because of this situation.

Now is the time for the federal government to get on board with the Queensland government's plans to create major infrastructure projects like the Townsville stadium. We need to see something tangible and we need to work collaboratively on something that we know will create over a thousand jobs and generate momentum to activate an area and, importantly, encourage private investment which will drive further jobs not only in construction but also in the retail and hospitality supply sectors. Townsville and Thuringowa families cannot rely on hope any more. It is not a strategy. They have endured enough. We need something tangible.

North Queenslanders have been down before when challenged by natural disasters. We are a community that comes together to overcome adversity, but we still need a hand up from all levels of government to recover. A sum of \$5 billion in federal funding was available through the northern Australia infrastructure plan, but in Townsville we have seen nothing tangible. The stalling of that program by the federal government further delays and slows down things in Townsville. I call on the federal government to come good, to stump up and to help deliver for North Queensland. In stark contrast, our government is doing everything it can, such as through the Accelerated Works Program, to create jobs.