




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.16 pm): I rise to make a positive contribution to the Appropriation Bill 2016.

**A government member:** Well, someone needs to!

**Mr HARPER:** Absolutely. The 2016-17 state budget was delivered by our great Queensland Treasurer, Curtis Pitt, who just days ago stood here in this place to deliver his second budget for our fantastic state of Queensland. I commend the Treasurer for delivering a budget that has prioritised the regions including my home city of Townsville.

What does this budget mean for the people of Thuringowa? This is a budget that puts a focus on our regions, like Townsville, which in infrastructure alone saw an increase of some \$44 million compared to this time last year. Broadly speaking, this budget has a focus on innovation, investment and infrastructure. Through the Regional Action Plan, the entire Townsville area is benefitting from \$586 million being invested into our city through infrastructure alone, like the new Townsville stadium. Thanks to this budget, that now has a total of \$140 million committed for the people of Townsville who want, and now will see, this major infrastructure project and other projects like the stadium built and jobs delivered by our Palaszczuk government. These infrastructure projects in Townsville are estimated to support up to 1,500 jobs.

Another major focus of this budget is on health and education. In the health sector alone, Townsville will see the investment of \$864 million, up \$56 million from the 2015 budget, for the Townsville Hospital and Health Service. After several interactions with the health minister throughout 2015—and I thank and acknowledge the health minister and the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland for ensuring the people of Townsville have a tertiary hospital and health service that we know is providing a quality and well-resourced level of service in health care in Townsville.

I know that the 56,000 residents of Thuringowa will actually benefit from this year's state budget. This is a budget that will grow jobs and provide a massive boost of confidence to our local economy. It comes as no secret that our city has done it tough. I have spoken in this House before about the hardships faced by those employed in the once booming mining sector and other industries who have faced significant employment challenges during the mining and minerals downturn.

I have also said in this House previously that when we came into government we were all still suffering from the Newman-Nicholls LNP hangover, and no amount of medication could take away that headache. We had seen thousands sacked across the public sector. This also had negative effects in the private business sector. Whether in hospitality, real estate or other industries, people were also seeing and feeling those negative effects of that failed Newman-Nicholls LNP government that literally depressed our economy and drove business confidence down. After mass sackings, people simply stopped spending at their local restaurants and clothing outlets. Under the LNP, as we know, the cost of living and things like electricity costs skyrocketed.

As a result of those previously mentioned events, Townsville is unique in having experienced the perfect storm in terms of our fine city experiencing high unemployment. I congratulate our Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer for not only listening to the three local state members—and I include my neighbouring electorates of Mundingburra and Townsville because we stand together in Townsville—but our senior leadership has delivered the most significant, much needed economic and confidence boost that Townsville has seen in years. I will speak later about the significant Palaszczuk funding of up to \$140 million for the new stadium, but we know that it is more than a stadium: it is about delivering 700 jobs and apprenticeships.

I want to talk about apprenticeships, because I heard the member for Clayfield this morning in his budget reply speech announce a \$500 bonus voucher for 20,000 apprenticeships. It is a tokenistic approach which comes all too late at the end of their apprenticeship if completed. I do not know the last time those opposite spoke to apprentices, but they need the money up-front to do their training. I do not know the last time they bought the tools which are required for the trades, but they are seriously out of touch. They can join their federal LNP counterparts because they cut the tools allowance. I have spoken to tradies and apprentices in Thuringowa and they will not forget that.

Both state and federal Labor have a good, sound policy of 10 per cent apprenticeships and trainees under the Building and Construction Authority and our Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. I welcome the Treasurer's \$100 million Back to Work fund because regional employers who hire an eligible unemployed person will receive a \$10,000 payment and up to \$15,000 for a longer term unemployed person who has been without employment for over 12 months. The \$100 million package is broken down into \$80 million in support payments for regional jobseekers; \$10 million for the Certificate 3 Guarantee Boost program; and \$10 million for the necessary infrastructure behind that. We need officers who will connect local employers with jobseekers. Bill Shorten, should he get in, and federal Labor get it as well, will commit \$285 million for start-up apprentices. If they get in, from 1 July 2017 there would be \$3,000 up-front payments for 10,000 apprenticeships from start to finish. Only Labor backs apprenticeships and vocational training because we believe that every Australian should have a chance to gain real skills and get a good job.

The momentum of that announcement for the Townsville stadium and those jobs has created further investment for local government, the North Queensland Cowboys and the federal government, which all together have resulted in something that is difficult to articulate. People are talking positively about this everywhere throughout our city. From pubs and clubs to workplaces, we now have a positive view and a new shared vision that our great city can now address our unemployment challenges and deliver this major infrastructure project, which we know will be a catalyst for urban renewal, investment and innovation throughout the years to come. Mums and dads in Thuringowa can rest assured that their children will have an opportunity to learn a trade or gain an apprenticeship in the important areas of hospitality and tourism, just to name a few.

Let us look at some of the core announcements for Thuringowa. I must start by thanking the Deputy Premier and main roads minister for the state infrastructure program. I can now see a line in my budget breakdown with a real funding amount of \$30 million for stage 1 of the duplication of Riverway Drive. It is real money, and I did not have to sell assets to deliver it. I worked extremely hard to get this funding, and I will work harder over my time as the member for Thuringowa to see the entire project delivered. Yes, I will see it delivered and I will continue to fight for funding for stage 2 safe in the knowledge I am delivering the single biggest infrastructure spend for the duplication of Riverway Drive that the electorate of Thuringowa has seen in many years. It joins the well and truly advanced and underway \$6.3 million funding—through the delivery of the accelerated capital works program—for the widening and wide centre line treatment and resurfacing of Herveys Range Road.

I have worked hard and made numerous representations to the relevant ministers in the areas of health, ambulance, fire, education and community services in my electorate, and I am very proud of the following achievements as announced in the 2016-17 budget. I have worked hard in the last 12 months to develop good working relationships with all Thuringowa school principals, P&Cs and P&Fs who each provided me with a list of priorities of their wants and needs which I presented to the education minister and discussed on numerous occasions throughout the last year. I must thank the education minister for helping me deliver over \$3 million in funding for local Thuringowa schools like the Kirwan State High School, which received \$2 million in funding for shade structures and synthetic flooring for a quadrangle to provide a place for students to meet and reduce the effects of our harsh North Queensland environment. I remain committed to working with the dedicated P&C, the school executive and the broader Kirwan State High community to deliver a school hall for the second-largest high school in the state. I am determined to deliver this whilst I maintain a pulse. They will also get a refurbished \$600,000 art building thanks to the budget.

I must put on record that I only recently had the honour of naming the year 7 building at Kirwan State High School in the memory of John Livingston, the executive principal of Kirwan State High School, who gave 110 per cent during his 27 years of service to students and his school community. I had the pleasure of meeting 'Mr 110 per cent', as he was fondly called, on a number of occasions in 2015 during his battle with a brain tumour. As I stated in my speech during the naming ceremony, Mr Livingston told me in no uncertain terms that as the new MP I must look after his school and give 110 per cent. In his memory I have certainly done that, and I hope the announcements in this year's budget will stand as testament to my determination to deliver for all schools in Thuringowa. I hold the Kirwan State High School, a school of excellence, high in my list of priorities and I hope that I am doing Mr Livingston proud.

I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech into *Hansard*. It has been checked with the Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

Rasmussen State School, also holds a special place to me. The ever energetic Principal Claudine Moncur was over the moon when I rang and informed her that her great school (also nominated as a State School achieving massive results in Thuringowa) was speechless when I informed her of \$450,000 in funding for General learning Areas and 2 spaces in Prep at J Block, Rasmussen State School.

Kirwan State School: \$265,000 in funding for refurbishment of 4 General learning areas at C block, Kirwan State School.

Weir State School: \$ 225,000 in funding for refurbishment of Junior and senior female Amenities for this great local school.

Thanks to the Minister representing the Premier in North Qld, and Member for Mundingburra, the families in Thuringowa will share in the spoils of 6.6M funding for the Townsville Hospital Paediatric Unit.

Mr Speaker, it gets even better having this dedicated Minister for Disabilities & Seniors based in Townsville, who not only delivered forward funding for people with a disability transitioning to NDIS, we also benefit in 6.7 M in funding to assist people with a disability and their families to access the support and services they need in Thuringowa, including service provided like:

Choice, Passion Life (formally Cerebral Palsy League) in Kirwan, or Endeavour Foundation in Condon, and the great Coothingara Society who provides services in Kirwan and Rasmussen.

As the local State Member, I have had numerous interactions with these organisations and they are true community champions who work so hard with families in the disability sector and I commend all organisations for the work they are doing, all very busy in the lead up of course to the NDIS space.

Public Housing Mr Speaker, is important in Thuringowa and through my interactions with Minister for Public Works Mick De-Brenni MP and I thank the Minister for his support in this Public housing Space.

I am pleased to see the announcement of \$8.3M in funding for 2 major Public housing projects in Kirwan and Condon. One is a 16 x 2 bedroom room 5 Storey Apartment style Units, and the other is a 3 Storey 12 x 1 bedroom apartments, importantly both projects will incorporate accommodation for disability access.

These projects will also allow for local contractors and Sub contractors to employ more people and through good Labor Policy will ensure apprenticeships and training opportunities for our youth are also part of this investment in Thuringowa, because Mr Speaker, we need to ensure we are creating jobs in these projects.

Mr Speaker, I have had many interactions with senior Police in Townsville and Thuringowa and made representations to the Minister for Police to ensure Townsville, with its RAP located in Thuringowa is well resourced in the future in terms of Police Officers and they have the resources required to continue the great work the Police do in terms of protecting the public and ensuring a Safe Community.

I have also made representations to our Attorney General to ensure community projects like Project Booyah receive the funding they deserve to continue the fantastic results they have achieved to turning around the young lives of people who may have otherwise ended up on a path of crime.

I can say the same for Paramedics Mr Speaker, our Paramedics in the Qld Ambulance Service do a great job in our Community, and I have made representations the Health Minister to ensure Townsville has a focus on more paramedics in the Townsville Local Area Service Network, after many interactions with local QAS staff, I know they are working hard in a busy service which just seems to get busier with a growing and ageing population.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to see an Organisation, the RSPCA has also benefited from this Budget. \$1.5M will go to this great organisation located at the Bohle, they have been around for a number of years, and we know they have struggled cater for the amount of animals that are poorly mistreated and end up at the centre.

The Townsville RSPCA are committed to saving animal lives and have a great adoption programme to re home these pets who just need a new home and loving family.

I know they welcome this funding and I again thank the Minister O'Rourke for her assistance in ensuring we deliver for the Townsville RSPCA.

Mr Speaker, I will continue to work hard and deliver for the constituents of Thuringowa, I am determined to see a range of other projects delivered in my time as the Member for Thuringowa.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.