




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Thuringowa Electorate

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.58 pm): What an underwhelming contribution from the member for Burleigh. I rise to share with the House some very positive news about what is occurring in Thuringowa and Townsville more broadly regarding jobs growth through infrastructure projects either underway, planned or recently announced. When you get your policy settings right, as we have through our Buy Queensland policy, we get the direct value-add of local jobs growth that we have seen in Townsville since our election in 2015. When we entered this 55th term of parliament Townsville had double digit unemployment figures. The LNP were thrown out of government thanks largely to the plan of the former LNP premier Campbell Newman and his trusty right-hand man, treasurer Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield, to sell our assets, cut thousands of jobs and slash business confidence.

Last Friday I attended the North Queensland Infrastructure Work Pipeline and Skills Map forum on our Queensland government public and private infrastructure projects that are underway such as the North Queensland stadium and Riverway Drive. This forum was held at Tec-NQ, and what better place to hold a future jobs forum? Tec-NQ is the only place in Queensland where we are training over 300 students annually who are seeking a trade during their senior school year. It is unique and it is ours. This training facility is creating the next generation of tradespeople. The forum was hosted by the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. Interestingly, Townsville's leading economist, Mr Colin Dwyer, took us on a journey of the last 20 years of economic activity in our city. He reflected on the highs of the mining boom and the lows of the GFC, the mining downturn and that kidney punch of the Queensland Nickel Refinery closure that rocked our city in 2016. Why did he do that? You need to know where you have come from before you know where you are going.

Mr Dwyer also demonstrated the worst time for public infrastructure investment in North Queensland by previous governments. Not surprisingly, it was indeed the years between 2012 and 2015. What a coincidence that these were the Newman-Nicholls years. Under \$100 million was spent on public infrastructure and government investment in our city in that time. It gets worse. LNP members opposite tell us that they stick up for local and small businesses. Because of those so-called champions of small business, the LNP allowed, under its watch, for our proud city to take a massive hit in the form of the net loss of 582 business registrations between 2012 and 2015—all gone down the gurgler.

There is a brighter future. Our government has invested heavily in our city. In stark contrast, some \$1.2 billion has been invested over our time in government, thanks to the Premier's vision of building a better Queensland. Mr Dwyer spoke of 65 projects totalling some \$7 billion on our radar through things like the Singapore deal, port growth and other local infrastructure projects, all looking to create thousands of jobs.

Last Friday Minister Mark Bailey was in Townsville announcing that Stanwell Corporation had given the Burdekin Falls hydro scheme the commercially viable green light. It fits perfectly with our dozen other renewable energy projects such as the massive Ross River Solar Farm now starting in

Thuringowa. This means more local jobs. There is indeed a renewable energy boom occurring in North Queensland and it is creating more jobs. We are harnessing North Queensland power for North Queensland—driving up local supply and reducing power prices.

Speaking of power, it was perfect timing for our Premier, who just two days ago announced what all Queenslanders wanted to hear when it comes to managing the everyday cost of living, particularly when it comes to electricity bills. We saw a price increase of 43 per cent under the LNP. We have our \$300 million Affordable Energy Plan. Labor governments always put people first, and the Premier's announcement that some 1.9 million residential homes will each receive \$50 off their bills for the next two years gets even better for regional Queensland. In regional Queensland, all Ergon customers who arrange a fortnightly or monthly direct debit will receive \$75 off their bill, and small businesses that do the same will receive \$120. How good is that?

Other initiatives kick in for those who buy energy efficient air conditioners, fridges and washing machines. I wish I had not bought mine last year because now I will not get that rebate! There is a stark difference between a caring Labor government and a cold, arrogant and out-of-touch LNP who simply know no other way.

It is no secret that we in North Queensland are proud and stand collectively during rough times. In North Queensland we rise, we lift confidence through private and public infrastructure and we create jobs and a better economic climate for future investment. There is indeed a brighter future.