



Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Thuringowa Electorate, School Infrastructure

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.21 pm): As members well know, the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to deliver on school infrastructure in Thuringowa and throughout the Townsville region. When I say deliver, I mean deliver, with over \$110 million in funding already being delivered or about to be delivered as part of our 2017 state election commitments to build state schools and infrastructure and create hundreds of local jobs while doing it.

Only last week I was rapt to join the Minister for Education, Grace Grace, at a number of important events in our fine city of Townsville. These key milestones were both the opening of the \$2 million quadrangle at the Kirwan State High School and the official opening of the \$54 million North Shore State School which is stage 1 of the massive \$90 million commitment for that school. I thank the minister for packing so much in during her 24-hour visit, including a visit to our Thuringowa State High School looking at the Stars Program and later, at James Cook University, where we met with some real community champions, the Coco family, who were down from Atherton and are now the ambassadors for quad bike safety. The family were down for the seventh annual North Queensland Injury Prevention and Return to Work Conference.

The past few weeks have been busy for all of us in Townsville, particularly after the Commonwealth Games events and the great festival in our city. We must acknowledge the former minister for education Kate Jones who, in her time, committed so much funding for Townsville schools that it took Armaguard to deliver it. Now we are seeing these school projects come to fruition. After much lobbying from all three Townsville MPs, a former principal in Mr Deputy Speaker, and Minister Coralee O'Rourke, our combined efforts ensured \$90 million was secured to build the new North Shore State School.

Prior to the redistribution in the 2017 state election my electorate of Thuringowa included areas adjacent to the northern beaches, including the suburbs of Deeragun and Burdell. The number of students at Northern Beaches State High School and in particular at Bohlevale State School were very high—actually exceeding capacity at Bohlevale. With the northern beaches one of the fastest growing areas in Townsville, if not the fastest, population growth dictated that we needed to invest in state schools. We thank the former minister for ensuring that funding of \$90 million.

After the redistribution, the member for Hinchinbrook is a recipient of that money. He joined us at the opening. I must commend the former principal of Kelso State School in Thuringowa, Mr Patrick MacDonald—Mr Mac as he is affectionately known—and the North Shore State School P&C and steering committee for working so hard to make sure it all came together—all within a year. What an impressive and modern school it is with—and I think the minister would have to agree—the biggest school car park we have ever seen so that all other electorates would want just a small part of it. The

school exceeded enrolment expectations of 200 students in its first year, with student numbers hitting nearly 300. They already have a great and enthusiastic choir. I wish them well in future years with the growth in their school, with stage 2 of the high school commencing over the next two years.

Of course, the major benefit for us in Townsville is the boost to the local economy through hundreds of jobs in that particular construction alone. That state investment has spurred on the private school sector as well, in particular the Catholic Diocese in Townsville. Our state government has co-invested \$6 million in the construction of the St Benedict's Catholic School, which is in Thuringowa, not too far away from the North Shore State School. I will speak more about that after the official opening.

As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is nothing better than having 2,000 students screaming out in celebration, particularly at the opening of the quadrangle at the Kirwan State High School. Our state Labor government invested in this project. It is a shade structure which is also a learning structure. It was great to see so many wonderful smiling faces. I took a photo of 2,300 kids sitting on the grass at the Anzac Day school ceremony in 2015. Never again. They now have that structure. Right beside that structure there is a new hall being constructed as we speak. It means more local jobs. Paynter Dixon are undertaking that work. I thank the school P&C, in particular Mr Des Morris, and the entire school community. It is an exciting time for Kirwan State High School. I cannot wait for that hall to be opened up.

I could tell members about Heatley Secondary College. Last week I did my first speech at their Anzac Day ceremony. We have \$10 million to invest in that school alone. We are getting on with the job of creating a new manual arts building there and new fences. I want to give a shout out to the manual arts teacher who had a snake envenomation. He is doing well. He is recovering. All the best to that teacher.