




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Thurston, Mr J

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.21 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker Stewart, I think you will enjoy this one, as tomorrow we celebrate the life of a true North Queensland champion as he takes to the field of 1300SMILES. He was born in Brisbane on 25 April 1983. This 35-year-old was born to a proud Indigenous Gunggari mum and a New Zealand dad of Maori heritage. Now I know why I get on with the bloke so much! Of course, we are talking about the great Johnathan Thurston. He will take to the field for the very last time on what will be a very special occasion for the North Queensland fans who follow him and to celebrate what he has given to the game of Rugby League in North Queensland.

It is not so much what he has achieved on the field—and there are many accolades—but what he has done off the field. It would be remiss of me not to talk about that great moment in time of the 2015 premiership-winning North Queensland Cowboys team when he led them to victory in the last minute. In fact, there is now a play called *The Longest Minute*. We saw it again, Mr Deputy Speaker. You were there with Peter Beattie and we watched them do it again. They closed the curtain on the Brisbane Broncos game in true North Queensland Johnathan Thurston style in the last minute. It must have broken the Broncos' hearts, but we loved every minute of it.

He has played 37 State of Origin games and six Indigenous All Stars games. He is a four-time Dally M medallist and awarded the Golden Boot. This kid who started in Sunnybank as a junior was too small in his junior years to play. He actually offered to play for free for a number of clubs, but it was the Bulldogs who took him on in 2002 to 2004 before that great transition to the North Queensland Cowboys. How proud we all are in North Queensland of what he has achieved off the field, particularly his mentoring of Indigenous youth and his support of the Cowboys House, giving these kids hope to dream, to think that they, too, can become like Johnathan Thurston.

He is a true leader in the community. He should be celebrated for everything he is doing for the game. We get to see him play tomorrow night for the last time. Then he takes on another Queensland team, the Titans, next week. Let's celebrate everything that Johnathan Thurston has done for the great game of Rugby League. We thank him dearly for what he has done in Townsville and for lifting our spirits every time. He is the bloke who chases the ball down. He is the first one to be there. He lifts our spirits. He has lifted the game. Thank you and thanks for the memories, Johnathan Thurston.