




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Thuringowa Electorate, Road Infrastructure

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.30 pm): I am pleased to report to the House that one of the most significant pieces of infrastructure in Thuringowa, which has taken nearly two years to complete, is now open to the public. Fellow members, I am talking, of course, about the infamous Riverway Drive stage 1 duplication. It took a committed and hardworking Labor MP to firstly get the funding—after I was elected in 2015—and then get this thing built.

For just a moment, let me put this \$35 million project into perspective. This project was promised in 2014 by the then LNP member, Sam Cox, who even went to the trouble of installing a big billboard with the word 'delivered' on it. I can show the former member what the word 'delivered' means. His proposal was that the LNP would build the road if the public re-elected the LNP and if the public agreed to flog off the port. Of course, that did not happen. The people of Townsville could see right through that. They got rid of him after one term. They saw through his deceiving ways of, 'I'll promise you this if you deliver that.' The good people of Thuringowa put me in—a really committed local—to get the job done and they did that again in 2017. The former member took his bat and ball and went to stand as a One Nation candidate in the Burdekin electorate, where he lost again.

I am very proud to say that, on the back of delivering the \$7.2 million Hervey Range Road upgrade in 2015—my first road project—which was delivered under Labor, in 2016 the planning phase of the Riverway Drive duplication project was started by Labor and is in its practical completion phase. People are driving on it. Again, that project was delivered by a Labor government that knows how to get the job done.

Under our buy local procurement plan, a Townsville company, BMD Constructions, which has been operating in the city for 25 years, has done a stellar job. It got this challenging job done and did so by employing 120 locals. I say 'challenging' because Townsville's main water pipeline from the Ross River Dam sits underneath that road and we all know how important water is to Townsville. This project is another Labor success story. The old pipeline under Riverway Drive was also built 30 years ago by the then Thuringowa city council. It was through careful engineering that BMD Constructions was able to complete this project. Over those 30 years, the suburbs of Condon, Kelso and Rasmussen, which is where I live, have grown in population to over 25,000 people and every day 20,000 cars travel along Riverway Drive. This duplication means so much. Daily, locals would sit in their cars on a single-lane road trying to get to work, or trying to get their kids to school.

This project has become a catalyst for development proposals by Geon Property and East Coast Invest. I love this. Between them they have submitted to the Townsville City Council nearly \$100 million worth of development applications for two major shopping centres—one an upgrade to an existing shopping site and one new site. These DAs are now both subject to council approval. As a local MP, I

can tell members how much I appreciate the level of investment displayed by both of those groups. I thank the owner of the existing centre, Charlie Manolis, and Ben Griffin from Geon Property for their vision in applying for this \$40 million major upgrade off the back of these roadworks to the existing Riverway shopping precinct. I also extend my appreciation to Matt Southwell from East Coast Invest for his \$55 million development application to the Townsville City Council.

Should those projects be approved, they will support hundreds of jobs in construction and retail and hospitality. To my mind, that is a massive investment and truly cements the saying, 'Build it and they will come'. In terms of jobs in the future, stage 1 of the Riverway Drive duplication has truly paid off. I look forward to seeing the results of those development applications.

I secured the money for the Riverway Drive duplication project from the Deputy Premier through the State Infrastructure Fund. I have told her and the Premier that I will be back, because I want us to deliver Riverway Drive stage 2 before I finish in this role. There is another four kilometres or five kilometres of duplication to go, but I think the people around the area of the road have roadworks fatigue. We will give them a break and start on the Townsville Ring Road stage 5, which is a \$36 million funding commitment that I received in this year's state budget. We are waiting on the federal government to stump up. So far there has been silence. In terms of partnering on the construction of that last piece of the Townsville Ring Road, we have heard nothing. This is a Labor delivered job. We need the federal government to get on board. I ask the federal government to come on board and get the job done for Townsville.