




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 30 April 2019

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.57 pm): I am glad to have Deputy Speaker Stewart in the chair because I am going to talk about Townsville. In North Queensland, particularly Townsville, we have a strong aversion to being told what to do. In Townsville we have endured the mining downturn, suffered under the LNP which cut jobs and sacked staff in health and education and we endured thousands being sacked after Clive Palmer walked away from QNI and the workers. Clive Palmer owes millions of dollars to workers and the federal government, the very government led by Scott Morrison who is now getting into bed with Clive Palmer—oh, the imagery! That arrangement alone should sound a dire warning to all in Townsville of how damaging that marriage will be for us in North Queensland. Townsville has also endured the worst flood in living history, displacing thousands, devastating over 500 businesses and damaging major infrastructure to the tune of \$1.5 billion. It takes a strong government to respond with all it can, and that is exactly what we are doing in Townsville.

Since being elected the Labor government has spent over \$1 billion on infrastructure such as the port expansion, the North Queensland Stadium, the water pipeline and road upgrades like Riverway Drive and the Townsville Ring Road. Hundreds of millions of dollars have gone into the Powering North Queensland Plan, restoring front-line jobs in health and education and building schools. We have and we are creating thousands of jobs in our city.

In Townsville we make up our own minds on issues before us. We will not be dictated to by the likes of News Ltd, Townsville Enterprise, Matt Canavan or any of those activists opposed to mining in the Galilee Basin, in particular by Adani. In Townsville locals can rest assured that the state government is supporting coalmining in the resources sector.

We have 52 million reasons to affirm that statement. Since 2015 when the Labor government came into office, we have indeed exported 52 million tonnes of coal out of the state. In the resources sector, 7,000 additional jobs have been created through mining approvals that support some 50,000 workers in the coal industry and there are thousands of more jobs coming. However, we have local media and now Townsville Enterprise Ltd, which have firmly nailed the LNP flag to their mast in regard to their latest comments in the paper, putting all members of parliament on notice and demanding immediate progress on the Galilee Basin; namely, Adani. This is all politically motivated in the middle of a federal election campaign. I ask that TEL, which consists of self-appointed nonelected individuals who purport to be apolitical, to draw a line in the sand and finally show their hand on where they stand in the political spectrum, because time will tell for TEL.

TEL is a member funded and Townsville City Council funded—which means Townsville ratepayers—organisation that paid the LNP thousands of dollars to attend an LNP state conference. They should not mislead people and say that they are apolitical. It is not the role of TEL to be engaged in or run political campaigns, trying to wedge state members of parliament to sign their politically motivated pledge. The chairman of TEL should stand down. He should go back to Townsville Airport.

He stood in front of the media and said, 'We are being treated like fools.' Yes, we are, Mr Kevin Gill. We are being treated like fools at Townsville Airport, because under his watch we have lost more international flights than we have gained. Under his watch we have to drive to Brisbane or Cairns to get an international flight. It is costing us. TEL is no friend of this Queensland state government.

I will be working with the Regional Development Board of Australia, which is doing good work on the inland road plan. It is a good mob and a good organisation to work with. On the Galilee Basin there are bigger proponents than Adani, such as China Stone, China South, South Galilee and Alpha mines, all quietly progressing through the approval process without the white noise coming from the likes of Lucas Dow, Townsville Enterprise Ltd, News Ltd and the activists.

The fact is that on the Queensland government website under 'State Development', the Coordinator-General has listed the review of the Adani approval process in August 2019—not before the federal election in May. Attempting to push the state members of parliament into interfering with the approval process is dangerous territory indeed. I am sure we will be hearing more from the federal minister Melissa Price about the Adani underground water approval process signed days before the federal election, under pressure from Senator Matt Canavan and ignoring advice from CSIRO. This smacks of political desperation. We want jobs in North Queensland. We need jobs. We will stand by and wait for the approval process, without political interference.