




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Upper Ross Police Facility

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.40 pm): On 19 November, I had the pleasure of joining many Thuringowa community representatives, including school principals, members of our Defence Force, many members of the Queensland Police Service and the deputy mayor, at the official opening of the new Upper Ross Police Facility. I am very proud to have represented the police minister at the opening of that new police facility. I thank the minister, who knows that, with the full backing of the community, I have put my heart and soul into getting this done. Unlike the LNP opposite, which abolished 330 police positions, I will back our police every day of the week.

The new police facility was completed in a relatively short time frame and it was done with the endorsement of the local community. In 2016-17, there was a need to increase the police presence in the Upper Ross corridor, which covers 25,000 residents in Condon, Rasmussen and Kelso, where my family lives. In 2015 after I was elected I established the Upper Ross community consultation group, which is now called the Upper Ross Community Voice. Issues of increased crime related activity were raised and I responded by starting an MP petition that was supported by the group to call for more police and a new facility to be established in Rasmussen. I tabled that petition in this House some time ago.

I also advocated for and delivered 20 additional officers to the Rapid Action Patrol hub in Condon. Prior to the new facility, the arrangement that the QPS had in the Upper Ross was for two single-officer beats that provided coverage on Monday to Friday from eight to four. Through ongoing discussion with police, one of whom is the secretary to the Upper Ross Community Voice, we gathered support to establish a trial involving an increased number of police officers to work out of one of the former beats, which sadly was a near-25-year-old demountable or donga that was hardly fitting for eight officers. The trial was a success and the decision was made, again supported by the community, to amalgamate the two existing single-officer beats into a new modern facility in Rasmussen, which is situated in the middle of the two old beats, just off Riverway Drive in Bluewattle Estate.

The Upper Ross Police Facility is far more than just a new police facility in our ongoing fight to make our community safer and reduce rates of crime. The new police facility has 10 police officers, which is five times the former number of police. Already it is paying dividends. This is what a hardworking local member does: he listens and delivers. The newly appointed officer in charge of the Upper Ross Police Facility, Sergeant Matt Dickson, and Sergeant Les Groves have both reported that calls for service in relation to crime related activity have already decreased in the Upper Ross corridor since they began operating some months ago. There is a deterrent effect in having police patrolling the area. I know the community of the Upper Ross is very happy with the increased police presence, as am I.

Timing is everything. I was very interested to hear that the Leader of the Opposition was in Townsville on the very same day that we opened the new police facility. In fact, the member would have driven past the new police facility on Riverway Drive on her way to the Ross River Dam where, along

with the LNP lightweight federal member, she was pretending to stand up for North Queenslanders. The media asked me to respond to her accusation that local Labor members of parliament were not delivering for Townsville. Not delivering? We have \$1 billion in infrastructure, including the North Queensland stadium, the water pipeline, the port expansion and the new Riverway Drive, along which she would have had to have driven. If I had known the Leader of the Opposition was in town, I would have asked her to come along and join community representatives as we officially opened the new police facility. That is the sort of thing that we are delivering in Townsville, on top of the 103 additional police that we are delivering. That is on top of boosting the Rapid Action Patrol hub from 20 to 40 officers. In 2017, what did the LNP promise Townsville in regard to police? They promised zero police in 2017, although they promised 20 officers for Cairns. I am sorry, but we needed them in Townsville. They wanted to sell the police academy. They had failed boot camps. The LNP is hopeless. They have no plans for supporting Townsville on any issue.

At a recent crime rally that we attended, we committed to listening to the community and we said that nothing will be off the table. All three Townsville members have received ideas for initiatives that we will take to the relevant ministers this week. In the coming months I look forward to further discussing other ideas with the police minister, such as the continuation of Operation Romeo Seville. We will stand up for Townsville, we will keep fighting for Townsville and we will make sure that the people of Townsville have a loud voice that is heard in Brisbane.