



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 4 February 2020

**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Thuringowa Electorate**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.20 pm): We have kicked off the year 2020 in far better shape than our start in 2019 following the flooding monsoon that affected thousands of people in Townsville. We have a long way to go in terms of making sure that people get back into their homes, but it is happening. We also need to make sure that people like Bobby and her son, whom we met in Heatley just recently, have the mental health support they need after they moved four times in temporary accommodation before finding their new home in Thuringowa with the help of the disaster recovery health team and The Oasis Townsville who renovated their unit.

I want to share some of my 2020 vision for Thuringowa with the House today. Let's start with the job-generating infrastructure projects such as the recent funding announcement of the Townsville Ring Road stage 5 being increased to \$230 million. That major project will create over 200 jobs and it is the final piece of the 22-kilometre ring-road that runs through the very heart of Thuringowa. It will include on and off ramps to Beck Drive, which is extremely important because that is a catalyst for a half a billion dollar residential development called Riverstone which we know will create even more jobs.

Those ramps will provide improved connectivity to JCU, the Townsville University Hospital and the nation's large defence base, Townsville's 3rd Brigade at Lavarack Barracks. Those three institutions alone employ more than 15,000 people. I was able to secure state funding of \$36 million for the ring-road in the 2017-18 state budget. As usual, it took a federal election to get the feds to come to the table. However, it has happened and I look forward to the hundreds of jobs it will create when the tender is awarded in the coming months.

This year I will keep delivering for our schools with my current MP petitions calling for funding for both Thuringowa State High School, a new hall, and Weir State School, a security fence and a new tuckshop in one of our city's oldest schools built in 1898.

Our Kirwan Ambulance Station is currently empty as officers have temporarily moved to Hervey Range Road. The old station will soon be demolished as the contractor, RCQ Projects, has been awarded \$5 million that I was able to secure. It will be completed this year. We will also open up the new Round Mountain Rural Fire Brigade. I take this opportunity to thank the 150 QFES Northern Region staff for their dedication to service as they helped our interstate colleagues through the devastating bushfires that continue to pose serious risks to communities.

We opened up the Upper Ross police facility in November. I have regular contact with the local officer in charge, who reported decreased calls for service in the Upper Ross with the now 10-strong crew—increasing from two—having a natural deterrent effect through increased patrols. There are not too many MPs who can say they have opened up a police, fire and ambulance station in their patch. I am proud to say that I will achieve that in 2020.

Of course, I could not mention Thuringowa without mentioning Riverway Drive. Last year we opened up the stage 1 duplication and in 2019 I was able to get funding for planning and surveying works for stage 2, which is well underway. Throughout January I have been out doorknocking for support to get stage 2 actually built. I have had hundreds of conversations and a 100 per cent success rate for people signing my MP led petition.

In 18 days we will have the opening of the Queensland Country Bank Stadium. It will be open for 'people's day'. It will be an exciting event. We will also look after the tradies with an event to help every one of those hard workers who have helped build our new stadium. Together, the people of Townsville have seen this \$290 million job-generating giant piece of infrastructure literally come out of the ground over the last two years. It has seen over 2,000 people inducted on the site, created hundreds of local jobs and supported over 500 local businesses through the supply chain.

On 29 February we will have Sir Elton John singing *Crocodile Rock* and entertaining North Queensland in our brand-new Queensland Country Bank Stadium that was truly built for North Queensland by North Queenslanders. Our stadium has become a catalyst for development of the \$40 million North Queensland Cowboys Centre of Excellence, which will be built on the stadium site along with the Hilton Hotel, creating even more jobs.

In 2020 there is a genuine sense of excitement and prosperity in Townsville as new restaurants and microbreweries have opened. That is a direct result of that catalyst project that has brought millions of dollars of private investment into our city and it will create even more jobs.

There is only one more thing to say, and that is on Friday, 13 March we kick off the Cowboys season when we verse the Broncos. All I am going to say is: go the mighty North Queensland Cowboys in 2020!