




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Drive It NQ

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.09 pm): In responding to COVID-19, we must unite and recover for Queensland. As we have heard said many times in this House, we have had an outstanding health response due to our early actions and good leadership by our Premier and this government. Now we must help our economy in finding job-generating infrastructure projects that will boost job creation and help boost struggling local economies like ours in Townsville.

In Townsville I have been a strong advocate for and strong supporter of the Drive It NQ project, which I know you, Mr Deputy Speaker Stewart, and the member for Mundingburra also strongly support. Drive It is a motorsport and driver education precinct that has been allocated land via a peppercorn lease with the Townsville City Council at the Lansdown industrial precinct in the Woodstock area at Calcium, just west of Townsville. The Lansdown precinct is also the site for the proposed battery manufacturing plant, which our government is backing through investment in the feasibility study, by investing in the North West Minerals Province through our backing of \$10 million in exploration for rare earth minerals required and, finally, through our commitment of \$16 million supporting CopperString 2.0. Lansdown will be the industrial site supporting thousands of jobs in Townsville, helping pave the way out of COVID-19.

In terms of Drive It, in Townsville we have a massive motorsport following, demonstrated by 150,000 fans backing the Townsville 400 for over a decade. I am certainly one of those motorsport enthusiasts. Historically in Thuringowa we have lost speedway and the dragway, and events at the karting track have been restricted due to residential development in the area. Last year, after lobbying Minister Bailey for assistance, I was able to announce \$5 million towards the upgrade of the intersection at Woodstock required to safely get people to and from the precinct which houses Drive It, which has begun stage 1 of its development. I thank Minister Bailey for his steadfast support of this project and road safety by investing money into the upgrades required. Pat Driscoll, chair of the Drive It group, said at the recent sod turning, attended by Deputy Speaker Stewart, that the \$5 million of state funding was as good as money for the project.

The Drive It facility will deliver an estimated \$35 million worth of economic benefit to Townsville through holding events and could also deliver driver training at the facility for our emergency services personnel, of whom there are over a thousand between fire, SES, QAS and police. It could also deliver this for the military. Proudly, Townsville has the largest defence base in the nation. Of course, with the Singapore deal there will be more people coming over—once we have moved through COVID and the international borders are reopened. That could be some time off, though.

The opportunities are endless. I am warmed by the positive support I have received from Minister Kate Jones in relation to Drive It. The minister knows how important this project is to Townsville. My message to Townsville is: let's go racing.