




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 10 September 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (11.32 am): I rise today to support and give my contribution to the appropriation bills 2020. It is interesting following the member for Burdekin. He wants to talk about laziness and incompetence. This is a man who has done nothing for jobs in North Queensland. I will unpack that a little further in my contribution. It is clear that due to our swift actions and listening to the Chief Health Officer, who has guided our health response in dealing with the global pandemic that is COVID-19 which world-wide has caused the deaths—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr HARPER: There is nothing funny about death. Over 800,000 people have been infected and died and over 20 million people have been infected. Our early work has placed us in a position to have an economic response and thank God for the Labor government which restored and invested in our nurses—1,800 nurses were sacked under the LNP—restored the 300 police that the LNP cut during its time in office and boosted our paramedic response. Queensland should never forget what the LNP did by sacking 14,000 people. We restored those public health officials who are doing the testing in the fever clinics and the contact tracing. You think this is funny?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Through the chair, please, member for Thuringowa.

Mr HARPER: Those on the other side might laugh and think that a global pandemic is funny, but we do not. It is our early health response that has guided us in our economic response.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Broadwater, you are on a warning.

Mr HARPER: That early response has required leadership and certainty for the millions in Queensland and, by God, we are getting that in spades from the Premier and her cabinet. I place on record my thanks to the Premier and the Treasurer who have committed to but also outlined a future budget to steer us out of COVID-19.

An opposition member: You won't be here.

Mr HARPER: I take the interjection. I have heard that before from someone else who sat beside me. He is not here. Keep it up. I note the national budget has been delayed and that other states and territories are not providing their budgets until we know the state of the national economy and what that means to our great state of Queensland.

After the shameful performance we have seen from the federal government in not allocating Queensland its fair share of GST, one questions why the federal government do not apply GST to major infrastructure projects like the Snowy hydro scheme yet in Queensland they determined that the Houghton water pipeline stage 2 in Townsville, which would deliver a desperately needed 1,000 jobs,

would attract a GST payment of \$156 million. Why did the federal member for Herbert lie to the people of Townsville? Phillip Thompson MP promised the people of Townsville that the federal government would deliver on its promise to fully fund stage 2, but it was this government that fully funded stage 1.

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe unparliamentary language was used.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Thuringowa, I will ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr HARPER: I withdraw. Members, did we hear a single word from the member for Burdekin? No! It was silence as usual. This infrastructure project will affect his community. He did not stand up for the jobs that will be created in delivering this infrastructure project to provide water security. We have now spent \$400 million on this project. The member for Burdekin has not said a word. He is lazy and incompetent. He has not done anything for the Haughton water pipeline. He did not fight to get the funding from the federal government. There was silence as usual and he should be ashamed.

We were let down not only by the federal LNP but also this rabble opposite, the rudderless state LNP, more interested in opening borders and infighting than standing up for Queensland. We have now proudly funded \$400 million for that pipeline stage 1 and 2 because that is what a Labor government does. We are building job-generating infrastructure. It was left to us to fully fund stage 2 because we know how important jobs are right now during COVID-19 to our community of Townsville.

Let me get on to what I do best in Thuringowa and talk about delivering roads, such as stage 5 of the Townsville Ring Road. Today it was announced that local tenders will build that road that the Treasurer committed funding to. That was in 2018. We have had to wait for a federal election for them to get on board, but it will deliver important jobs. This infrastructure project will run through the heart of Thuringowa. I know that the people of Thuringowa will appreciate the jobs that come with it. That is a \$230 million project that will duplicate the final stage of the ring-road and help deliver an amazing \$500 million residential development, Elements North Queensland, which will help boost more local jobs for tradies. This project includes the on and off ramps which I fought for to improve connectivity off Beck Drive to the Townsville Ring Road which will help get people to the three major employers of Townsville: James Cook University, Lavarack Barracks and the Townsville University Hospital.

I saved the best for last: I want to talk about my vision for delivering stage 2 of the infamous Riverway Drive. It was through hard work and strong advocacy that I got the funding for stage 1 of Riverway Drive. I thank the member for South Brisbane who helped get that funding, which was vital in delivering jobs. Unlike the former LNP member, Sam Cox, I did not have to put up a billboard on Riverway Drive saying, 'We will build it—but we'll have to sell the port'. There was a gun to the head of the people of Townsville and Thuringowa, but they did not fall for it. They backed a Labor government to deliver it and it was delivered under a Labor government.

I pledge that I will deliver stage 2 of Riverway Drive, which is a project that I have already started. Last year we committed \$700,000 for the planning. I intend to advocate strongly for the people of Thuringowa during our economic recovery to build more job-generating infrastructure, which has been a catalyst for private development. That is what Labor governments do: we deliver. Riverway Drive stage 1 has been a catalyst for private investment and is supporting hundreds of jobs right now. In fact, I think we are going to see fuel wars on Riverway Drive. We used to have two garages and now we have four. I have not seen Mobile or Liberty in Townsville for a long time. Small businesses are starting to invest because we have built infrastructure and that is fantastic. More small businesses opening up in Townsville means more jobs for locals. I will not stop there.

Under the Treasurer we have a clear vision to push for advanced manufacturing. The battery manufacturing plant at Calcium is where Drivelt is situated. I will continue to advocate for that. We have invested money in the North West Minerals Province, CopperString, Kidston hydro, the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam and Drivelt. With Minister Bailey we just turned the sod on the \$5 million project to get onto that site. Locally, we will deliver infrastructure for schools in Thuringowa such as Heatley Secondary College, which is undergoing a \$12 million upgrade right now, supporting hundreds of tradie jobs. That is what we need during COVID-19.

I am also very proud to see the Kirwan Ambulance Station almost complete. I look forward to opening that station in coming months. I admit that I have a bit of a bias towards Emergency Services. We have opened up the Rural Fire Brigade station at Round Mountain, just off Riverway Drive, and a new police station facility. That is what local members do: they back their community, they listen and they deliver. What we saw under the LNP was a complete failure. I have a clear vision for my community. I will continue to lead and help us unite and recover as we emerge from COVID-19.