



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL**

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 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.16 pm): I have been looking forward to this, particularly after that hard-hitting contribution from the member for Theodore! I rise to speak in support of the 2020 state budget appropriation bills. As the re-elected member for Thuringowa, I am humbled. It is with a great sense of pride that I get to once again represent the very good people of my electorate.

I have worked incredibly hard over the last two terms to deliver over \$150 million in job-generating infrastructure projects like—you heard it—Riverway Drive, stage 1.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** Members, I will get to stage 2 shortly. The new recently completed Kirwan Ambulance Station, the Kirwan State High School multipurpose hall and the new public housing complex all have disability access. Right now, there is a new one being built—you guessed it—on Riverway Drive. That hard work in delivering projects was once again rewarded in the 2020 state election when the people of Thuringowa placed their trust in me to continue to deliver for them for a third term. With over \$108 million in funding commitments, this budget already delivers in spades. Over \$68 million announced will go towards those job-generating projects. That is not a bad start.

The Leader of the Opposition yesterday gave what I would consider the worst budget reply speech I have ever heard. It was all bluff and bravado with a dose of arrogance thrown in. It was pretty light on. Why? There was no delivery of an alternative budget. It was so light on, it sent two of their members to sleep. Some vision, indeed!

**A government member:** Which ones?

**Mr HARPER:** The members for Mermaid Beach and Southport nodded off. Some vision indeed, member for Broadwater.

After the Leader of the Opposition's question without notice this morning about getting infrastructure going quickly, here is his legacy as the former minister for North Queensland and former member for Mundingburra in the Newman government era: we received less than \$100 million in infrastructure. This government has delivered over a billion dollars in infrastructure for Townsville.

I want to respond to his carry-on where the member commented on restoring the relationship with the federal government. Let's look at what the federal government has done for us in Townsville. They promised the people of Townsville they would deliver stage 2 of the Haughton water pipeline, only to let us all down when they wanted to charge us and the state ended up having to fund it. They wanted to take away \$156 million in GST allocation. I suggest the Leader of the Opposition gets on the phone to ScoMo and says, 'Join us in delivering billions of dollars of infrastructure.' He should get on the phone to ScoMo in an attempt at bipartisanship and to help deliver jobs. But he will not; he does not care.

What about Townsville Ring Road stage 5? I was very pleased to see a \$20 million budget allocation for that project. I actually received the first funding allocation in 2018. I have waited two years for an announcement from the federal government. They have predicted funding for that. I hope the project starts soon. The funding is on the never-never—2022. I pushed for that.

I thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads because we are getting on with delivering Townsville Ring Road stage 5 that will create 400 jobs. It is a \$240 million commitment co-funded 80-20 with the federal government. My goodness they drag the chain, like they did with the North Queensland stadium, the jewel in the crown of North Queensland. That is what the LNP do in Townsville—they promise the world and deliver nothing. In the recent election I saw the LNP candidate for Thuringowa copy just two of my election commitments, which meant she was about \$80 million short of what our Labor government had committed to. Some \$68 million has already been announced in this year's budget.

What a great start to this term of government. These are real, job-generating projects that we need to help boost the local economy. I thank the Treasurer for making sure people in my electorate and in Townsville get their fair share. I note that 58 per cent of the \$56 billion allocated for infrastructure in the budget will be delivered in regions outside South-East Queensland.

The Upper Ross police facility, which I opened last year, will also be complemented by the announcement of a \$30 million, state-of-the-art police station at Kirwan. We need to build this because an extra 150 police are coming to the region. I thank the Premier and the police minister for all their support in delivering more police for Townsville.

Having already delivered over \$28 million for my local schools like Kirwan State High School and its hall and Heatley Secondary College which is undergoing a \$12 million upgrade as we speak—jobs on the ground right now—that will be further complemented by the \$7 million announced in this budget for the Thuringowa State High School hall. Members may recall that I started an MP petition in 2019. I commend the P&C and the Thuringowa State High School community for getting behind this. I thank the Minister for Education for her support. Together we did this.

It is, of course, our government that backed the people of Townsville, such as through the \$290 million Townsville stadium, our jewel in the crown and home to the mighty North Queensland Cowboys. They will move into their new centre of excellence in March 2021. We hope we see the Cowboys beating the Broncos again. It will happen. Now that we have managed COVID so well we can fill our stadium and watch the Cowboys games. I hope the Cowboys bring it home in 2021.

In North Queensland we have the largest port in Northern Australia. In fact, Townsville was built on the back of that very port, exporting billions of dollars in commodities to the rest of the world. We have invested heavily in our port over 20 years. A \$2 billion expansion is underway, creating more local jobs.

With our investment in the mighty North West Minerals Province, with millions backing exploration, CopperString 2.0, our rail and road corridor, and our resources sector are in good hands. We aim to capture rare earth materials like vanadium in Cloncurry or cobalt and other minerals to back our vision to create over a thousand jobs in North Queensland at the Lansdown industrial estate where this government has backed battery manufacturing. All of these minerals will be needed to help bring that project to fruition.

Lansdown is the home of Drive It NQ—a motorsport and driver education precinct which I have been passionate about delivering since I got elected. We are going to deliver it because we received \$10 million to land that project. It is going to boost tourism and the local economy. I was talking about this with Minister Hinchliffe only the other day. Drive It will deliver not just jobs but more money in terms of events. We cannot wait for that to be finished. We cannot wait to have the minister up there. In 2019 I received \$5 million for the required highway intersection upgrade.

I was interested to see the Katter member for Hinchinbrook post on social media—'Delivered for Drive It, \$10 million'. It was Labor members in Townsville who delivered that. We worked hard and we got it down.

**Mr Stewart:** You worked hard.

**Mr HARPER:** I will take the interjection from the member for Townsville. Thank you very much. We did do that.

It is abundantly clear that our North Queensland University Hospital delivers world-class health care. As a tertiary receiving hospital, we look after people right across North Queensland from the west to the cape, providing specialist care. It was our government that delivered over a billion dollars to our

health and hospital service in 2019. We have done it again in this budget. There is over a billion dollars. I am pleased to see more funding will ensure our hardworking nurses, doctors, paramedics, allied health and administrative staff have not only the best facilities but also additional staffing so that they can keep delivering dedicated, professional health care. We thank them for the outstanding role they played during COVID-19.

The Kirwan Ambulance Station is now built. The staff moved in a few weeks ago. I know that because I am one of those paramedics, registered under AHPRA. As a volunteer at the Kirwan QAS station—I will be doing some shifts over Christmas—I can tell members that the staff are very happy to be in their new home. That was a \$5 million investment. With \$40 million committed to the Kirwan health campus we are backing the delivery of health care in Thuringowa. I thank the former health ministers and the now Treasurer for that funding. I look forward to working with the health minister on delivering even more health announcements for the Townsville HHS.

Our schools are the heart of our community. To date we have delivered not only a new school in Townsville, but in Thuringowa we have delivered over \$25 million in school projects for our primary and secondary schools. There is so much going on. There are local jobs on the ground. I was so happy to see money allocated for Thuringowa high.

I have saved the best for last, my favourite project, Riverway Drive stage 2. Members will have to hear about this for four more years. I know government members will be excited to hear updates on Riverway Drive. Those on the other side might not be. We have a really good story to tell. I think it is great. Over \$40 million has been invested by the private sector in building new supermarkets and garages—you name it, it is all happening on Riverway Drive. I cannot wait to see what stage 2 will deliver. I have to thank the Premier, the Treasurer, the former treasurer and the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for their steadfast support of that major project. We have delivered and done the heavy lifting for the \$43 million stage 1.

We have \$20 million committed for stage 2. It was the Minister for Transport and Main Roads who worked directly with federal Minister McCormack to get \$75 million of infrastructure funding. The member for Herbert did not know anything about it. We dealt directly at that level. We are going to deliver that funding. That is what happens when governments work together. We will see jobs created out of that.

It is clear that our economic plan announced in the lead-up to the election is for all in Queensland. Queenslanders got behind us. They voted for a state Labor government in the recent election as they understood what it meant to keep jobs going by delivering real job-generating infrastructure in Queensland. They understood that we had to borrow to build. We told them that. It is just like the federal government that will go into deficit by over a trillion dollars. The other side gets up and moans and whinges. They have not changed. They have their heads down. There is no excitement. Get a bit of energy.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** That is the way, fire up! The reality is that COVID-19 affected every country across the globe. They borrowed money. We borrowed money. We will build infrastructure.

However, the LNP did not go down that path and I have to talk about that. I would not miss this opportunity, because I worked hard to ensure that the people of my electorate of Thuringowa get their fair share in this budget, unlike the LNP candidate for Thuringowa who was a staggering \$80 million short in funding commitments. All they did was copy a couple of my commitments. What about Katter's, One Nation and Palmer? What did they commit? They committed nothing. That is why they are not representing Thuringowa here today. They committed nothing in the entire lead-up to the state election.

What is the difference between a Labor MP and others? We are poles apart. It is clear that our state government has listened and is committed to delivering. I commend the Premier, Treasurer, Deputy Premier and all of the ministers for their steadfast support and enduring leadership in a pandemic, for being true to the people and for being an authentic government who listens and cares and is compassionate and kind to all. I commend the bills to the House.