




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2021

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville, Water Security

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.31 pm): What a contrast this contribution will be compared to the delusional ramblings we just heard from the member for Kawana!

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr HARPER: On this day, the day of the federal budget, I rise on a matter of critical importance to the city and people of Townsville. I am glad that in his contribution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned water infrastructure in Townsville, because that is what this is about.

In mid-October 2020, before the state election, I sought a meeting with the federal member for Herbert, Phillip Thompson, to raise with him a matter of concern: the main water pipeline that delivers 70 per cent of Townsville's water from the Ross River Dam six kilometres, under Riverway Drive, to the Douglas Water Treatment Plant. In 2020 I got a funding commitment to deliver stage 2 of Riverway Drive—after we had done the heavy lifting on Riverway Drive stage 1, \$43 million, which was opened in 2019.

In 2020 we started scoping works on Riverway Drive stage 2, because stage 1 was a catalyst. The scoping works found that the Townsville water pipeline is at the end of its operational life and that there are critical sections of it that will fail. That was found out in mid to late 2020. I got the commitment in October 2020. Ironically, I was joined by the federal government, which co-funded it. In December 2020 a piece of that pipeline broke—it failed—plunging Townsville into chaos for two days. We could not even shower. Think about the impacts on our hospital. The major city in North Queensland did not have water security.

We can look at the federal member's contribution over the years in terms of promising to deliver on water security and the lies he told the people of Townsville in 2019 in relation to what would be funded.

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member has used unparliamentary language and I ask that you ask him to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): I agree that you have used unparliamentary language. I ask that the member withdraw.

Mr HARPER: I withdraw. I now table some copies of the *Townsville Bulletin*.

Tabled paper: Articles from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 21 June 2019, titled 'ScoMo needs to cough up the cash now for Stage 2' and 5 December 2018, titled 'Houghton Pipeline Stage 2 business case tender to open next week' [619](#).

An editorial states—

... some seven months since the funding offer was made and the cash is nowhere to be seen.

That was in June 2019. In 2020, there were further reports of 'promising to deliver' but they did not actually deliver the funding for the Haughton pipeline stage 2. The \$195 million that was set aside was a lie to the people of Townsville. It was never delivered. It is in the paper.

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is the same point of order in that the member has used unparliamentary language—a word that we in this place are not to use. I ask that you ask him to withdraw.

Mr HARPER: I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker. An untruth was told to the people of Townsville—if that makes the member feel better. We were promised money and it was never delivered. I have a funding commitment to deliver stage 2.

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have made a ruling. It is not about whether the member wants to satisfy the member for Surfers Paradise with the withdrawal. The rules of the parliament are that we are not to use that word. I think it is a reflection on you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the member did not give an unqualified withdrawal.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Kawana. As I heard it, the member did withdraw his comment.

Mr HARPER: We can start to see just how critical water security is for the people of Townsville. We cannot deliver stage 2 of Riverway Drive unless the water pipeline that delivers 70 per cent of Townsville's water is fixed. The city council and the state government are working together. I table a letter I wrote to the member for Herbert in April this year.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 23 April 2021, from the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, to the Federal member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson MP, regarding the main water pipeline in Townsville [620](#).

I met with the federal member in October last year, but 180 days later I had heard nothing from him about helping secure and repair that water pipeline.

Mr Walker: Shame.

Mr HARPER: The member for Mundingburra knows just how important water security is for Townsville. I finally got a reply on 30 April. It is worth nothing. The member for Herbert wants to play political games. He did not even mention the fact that that water pipeline is critical. He knows that it is co-funded and that we need to fix it. I ask the member for Herbert to stop absolving himself of responsibility for water security and to get on board with the state government and the Townsville City Council to fix this pipeline. We cannot again have the issue of water failing in a major capital city.

I reflect on two other important areas that I would like to see addressed in the federal budget tonight: aged care and housing. We need the federal government to step up and to stop walking away from remote and Indigenous community housing. On the day of the federal budget, the Leader of the Opposition did not say one word about fixing the health system or more money for aged care. People are blocking hospital beds when they could be in residential care facilities, but we have GPs who do not want to go there because of the Medicare rebate. We need our aged-care system fixed. People have worked hard all their lives and deserve care in the home.