



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Townsville, State of Origin



**Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (7.15 pm): Good speech, member for Toowoomba North.

Queenslander! That was the call that went up—and you mob would have heard it down here, I imagine, when 28,000 people piled into Country Bank Stadium. I want to talk about the amazing transformation of our city that led to the great State of Origin game 1. Let's deal with the result. It is over now. Yes, Queensland lost. I know that Peggy used to hang it on me for the Cowboys. He was also a New South Wales supporter. He got his last wish: they won. They were a good team.

Our job was to land the event, and we did it. The boys, under Greeny, will need to lift if they are to have a shot in game 2. Queensland will need to dig deep. That is what we do in Queensland: when the chips are down, we stand back up and have a shot. I hope the result is different in game 2. It was good to see three Cowboys players in Val Holmes, Kyle Feldt and Coen Hess make the Queensland team. They are all local juniors. Go get them, boys!

Hosting that game has boosted our local economy by millions of dollars. The 22,000 beds booked says a great deal, but the positive mood in Townsville was almost tangible. Normally staging such a huge event takes months of planning, but we got it done in nine days. I want to give a shout-out to the Premier, the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier not only for negotiating with the NRL to have the game played in Townsville but also for having the vision to build that stadium in the first place. We simply would never have had a shot at hosting Origin with the old stadium. When we opened the stadium I put a cheeky petition online to host it. Well, we did it.

I thank you to the entire team: Queensland Country Bank Stadium, led by manager Tom Kimble; great Queensland company Clifton Productions' national events manager Phil Harris—they got another 2,000 seats 1,400 kilometres up the highway to make our North Queensland caldron sing 'Queenslander'; and grounds manager Bruce Fouracre. What a name! The green grass was great. They all completed the final preparations to transform Queensland Country Bank Stadium ahead of the opener. The Premier knows that managing events like this in Townsville—the State of Origin opener—is an important part of our government's economic recovery plan.

The State of Origin was the most significant sporting event Townsville has ever seen. It injected millions of dollars into our economy. We had a thousand staff rostered on for the game. It was not just about the footy; it was the big festival that was going on downtown as well. It was fantastic. Virgin had extra flights and hotels were booked. Some 20,000 pies were eaten; there was 750 kilograms of North Queensland beef by Paul Bonner and the team at Sunvale; 4,000 kilograms of cheese; 15,500 litres of beer; and more than 500 litres of Bundy Rum. Queensland, lift and go get them in game 2.