




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville, Community Cabinet

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.31 pm): I can tell members that the Premier puts regional Queensland front and centre. Last week, Townsville hosted the regional cabinet. The Premier and her ministers came to our city with exceptional news and we welcomed them with open arms. They know that North Queensland is the economic powerhouse of Northern Australia and the Premier came with some very exciting news.

On day 1, regional cabinet met at the TAFE Queensland Bohle campus where the Premier announced \$17.2 million for the two renewable and advanced manufacturing skills centres. The new \$12.45 million hydrogen and renewable energy training facility will be a first for TAFE Queensland. It will support the training needed for Queensland's hydrogen industry, anticipated to be worth \$1.7 billion a year in exports by 2030. The new \$4.74 million advanced manufacturing skills lab will support the high-end manufacturing of tech like augmented reality, automation and robotics.

The new facilities are expected to be built in the second half of 2023, supporting local jobs during construction. They will allow TAFE to offer more than 20 new skill sets and certificate and diploma qualifications. The training hub will train our local young people who will be needed to provide the skilled workforce that our region will need to deliver in the renewable energy space and, boy oh boy, we are going to need them. Of course, that is in complete contrast to the LNP who wanted to sell and close down our TAFEs.

On day 2, one of the most significant announcements in North Queensland's history was made. The Premier announced \$5 billion to deliver the publicly owned CopperString 2032 project. I acknowledge the advocacy of the member for Traeger and recognise John and Joseph O'Brien for the work they have done behind the scenes for CopperString. Our government will deliver CopperString to provide affordable renewable energy to open up the North West Minerals Province. The 1,100-kilometre, \$5 billion expanded CopperString project will be 100 per cent government owned.

This is nation-building infrastructure that will create thousands of jobs for generations to come. It is one of the most significant investments in economic infrastructure in North Queensland since the railways were built. It will connect the North West Minerals Province with national electricity markets. From the country to the coast, from Mount Isa and Cloncurry to the city, we will provide one of the largest infrastructure projects ever seen, delivering 800 jobs during construction and thousands of jobs for the next generation's generation in the renewable energy space. The project will have estimated benefits of an additional \$133 billion in mining production and thousands of jobs in North-West Queensland will be created. There will be a resources boom with the mining of critical minerals that will be processed with renewable energy. Of course, Lansdown, just outside of Townsville, will be the hub for local manufacturing using minerals such as vanadium from the Julia Creek area.

However, where is the Leader of the Opposition in regards to CopperString? From him we hear absolute silence! He threw it over to his shadow minister. All they could do was talk about blowouts in costs. Clearly the Leader of the Opposition is silent when it comes to backing North Queensland. He lacks the intestinal fortitude to back in the largest infrastructure project our Queensland community has ever seen. The Leader of the Opposition is a lightweight. The true measure of leadership is when you back in significant infrastructure projects such as CopperString. As we all know, the Leader of the Opposition has gone missing, just as he did when he cut and ran from Townsville for Broadwater to take out a female sitting member of parliament. The Leader of the Opposition is nowhere to be seen in Townsville. He could not even talk about the \$5 billion investment in our city. He was silent on it because he does not back it. He does not back North Queensland. We have seen it time and time again. What a weak and limp-wristed approach to backing in the most significant infrastructure project North Queensland has ever seen.

Our Labor government is backing it in. Our Labor government is proud to back in the thousands of jobs that will be created right across North Queensland and right out to Mount Isa. It was one of the proudest days we have ever had. Our local businesses back it in. Over 100 local leaders joined us for the Premier's announcement at the Townsville Enterprise luncheon. They are backing it in and we are backing it in. Labor is delivering for North Queensland.