




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.02 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise to you, the House and Hansard in advance. I have a bit of a cough. I think a frog has just crossed its legs in my throat. I think it might have been from all of those Kneewuckers last night, so forgive me as I begin my speech.

I rise to support the Appropriation Bill 2023. I want to first congratulate the Treasurer for this budget—the best budget the Labor government has delivered in decades. It looks after Queenslanders. I wonder if those opposite have hit a wall. It is only Thursday and I question their level of energy. There is nothing positive; it is all whingeing and whining. This is a great budget for Queensland. It looks after Queenslanders. It goes to the very core of looking after Queenslanders, wherever they may live.

We know the cost-of-living increases have had an impact on everyday Queenslanders in each of our electorates. Rising prices across the board in food, fuel, electricity and building materials are being felt right across the nation and in fact all around the world in this post-COVID space we now find ourselves in. Global uncertainty has also pushed up prices, and we have seen massive issues with supply as well. At a Queensland level, we know that a responsible and caring Labor government can make the right decisions to ensure we provide our people with as much help as possible through these most challenging of times.

For instance, the Premier's announcement of free kindy for young families will save on average \$4,600 annually. We know just how popular this announcement is already. It will certainly help those young families in my electorate of Thuringowa. The cost-of-living relief goes further, with \$550 going to each home to reduce the impact of increasing power prices on everyday Queenslanders. Of course there is a further \$572 for eligible concession holders, equalling \$1,072. I know the seniors in my electorate of Thuringowa will welcome that. I know this budget has a clear focus on health, housing, infrastructure—

Mr Head interjected.

Mr HARPER: I am not taking your interjections, member for Callide.

Mr Head: You just did.

Mr HARPER: He is a serial pest, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you can warn him. I welcome the budget as it will provide for all of these and more in my electorate of Thuringowa.

Mr HEAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at those comments from the member for Thuringowa.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): The member has taken personal offence. Will you withdraw?

Mr HARPER: I withdraw. Before I get into the nuts and bolts of the budget impact in my electorate, I want to congratulate the health minister and Treasurer for increasing the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme by \$70 million. That impacts the cost of accommodation, flights, buses and taxis. I have been

making representations, along with other regional MPs, because we know the impact those increases have on patients. We have seen right across the board that those increases have had an impact on patients who have to travel from regional, remote, rural or Indigenous communities in our state to access treatment and care at a major health service or hospital.

I was pleased to see funding of \$17 million go towards building the new Kirwan health campus. I only got a briefing today from the department, so we will announce this very shortly. That is a total budget of \$40 million. I cannot wait for that to get underway. This new building will see facilities for prenatal and antenatal care, dental care and other areas of community health. Recently the health minister visited the Kirwan health campus with me and we got to meet the hardworking and dedicated health staff who deserve that new facility. As I said, it will start very shortly. The health minister knows I am keen to see the refurbished current area used for other aspects of health, be it spinal or rehab beds. I continue to gain community support, with a current petition underway to utilise that refurbished site when the new building is done.

I go to the major announcement, as the members for Townsville and Mundingburra will know. It was only last week that we had the Premier in Townsville to announce that \$538 million—over half a billion dollars—is being invested in our Townsville University Hospital to expand it by 143 beds. The new helicopter landing site will be on top of that building. That is normally only ever seen in capital cities. That is a real sign of progress and how our city of Townsville is growing. I know the people of Townsville and North Queensland will welcome that investment. To round out on health, we are delivering the new Burdell Ambulance Station to the cost of \$12 million for our expanding and growing city. I know local paramedics will welcome the new station with open arms.

Community safety has been a challenging issue for our community for well over a decade. I very much welcome the announcement of \$15 million for the new Kirwan police facility at the 1300SMILES Stadium. Further funding has been allocated to the Stronger Communities Early Action Group, supporting the office of public prosecutions to support criminal prosecution functions in North Queensland. There is funding for a Fast Track Sentencing pilot and Townsville Community Youth Response. We heard today that the Johnathan Thurston Academy will be expanded by \$4.7 million. These are all gold standard early interventions that the government is undertaking. They are evidence-based and they are working. We continue to do all we can to reduce rates of crime by investing in those programs.

It would be remiss of me not to mention my signature project. I am not speaking about Drivelt, but you can literally take a trip along the Townsville Ring Road Stage 5—and I thank the best transport and main roads minister in Queensland, Mark Bailey; thank you, mate—which is nearing completion. I thank everyone for their patience as those roadworks continue along Beck Drive. Of course I am speaking about Riverway Drive Stage 2, which has received more funding to begin those early works. We are working with Townsville City Council to deliver that new water pipeline and that has delayed the project, but we have invested a further \$33 million into that. The people of the Upper Ross know that that work is well underway.

I do want to address the member for Herbert who is misleading the community in today's *Townsville Bulletin* by saying it is at risk. The member for Herbert did not lift a finger for that additional funding. That was through the hard work of Minister Mark Bailey and me. We announced that. He did not even know about the announcement, let alone the water pipeline. He is telling a furphy to the people of Townsville. Once again, it will be delivered under a Labor government working with the federal Labor government. I understand the review is underway. I will fight and scrap to make sure that project is delivered for the good people of the Upper Ross.

I commend the Treasurer for delivering one of the best budgets this state has seen. It is all about looking after the people of our great state. I have had the remainder of my speech on the budget checked by the Deputy Speaker for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Townsville, and my electorate of Thuringowa have received significant funding for major projects, such as \$1.2 billion on infrastructure projects such as CopperString, raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam, and Lansdown Industrial project. Once again, we see a further \$1.3 billion in Health, which is welcomed by our hardworking and dedicated health staff across our Health and Hospital Service. In North Queensland we are no strangers to disasters, and I welcome nearly \$37M for disaster recovery. And we know Housing is a real and present challenging issue for our City, so I very much welcome the \$70M for social housing and the nearly \$18M for homelessness services to help try our best to help those most vulnerable in our community.

I am also very proud to see \$57M on education, and I welcome the \$5.8M being allocated to the Kirwan State School for a new hall. I have raised this with the education minister after meeting with the principal and staff regarding getting a new hall for students to assemble, and conduct other school activities, and this growing school certainly deserves one. After previously

delivering a new hall for Kirwan State High School, get funding for a new hall which will very soon start construction at Thuringowa High School and of course receive \$12M in former term to deliver a new performing arts centre for Heatley, this is about continuing that track record of delivering for my local schools.

So I very much welcome funding for: Willows State School will receive \$650,000 for refurbishment of block A. Heatley Secondary College will receive \$200,000 for prioritised nominated project. Rasmussen State School will receive \$148,000 upgrade playground infrastructure, \$720,000 to refurbish Block E and \$175,000 to refurbish outdoor learning and eating areas. Kelso Primary will receive \$545,000 to upgrade Block 2, and a further \$124,000 to upgrade the tuckshop. Heatley Primary School will receive \$124,000 to upgrade their tuckshop, and I continue to lobby for a new hall for this school and I will not give up. Kirwan State High school will receive \$440,000 to upgrade the home economics area. All up my electorate of Thuringowa will see over \$12,4M spent on local schools.

The Townsville Ring Road receives a further \$10M to finish this massive infrastructure project that will see a far safer road for all of us to travel daily. And of course Riverway Drive Stage 2 has received more funding which I know all in the Upper Ross will welcome.

When it comes to major infrastructure, I see more funding to upgrade the Upper Ross Sub Station to the value of \$5.8M, \$79M to the Kidston High Voltage Power line that is creating over 500 local jobs and is well underway.

Speaking of energy, ergon workers will receive \$6.3Million in new tools and equipment to safely do their job and I know they will welcome that announcement. A further \$5,5Million is budgeted to replace 66 kilovolt outdoor switch gear and \$5.3M is set for the Bohle TAFE Campus for their hydrogen and renewable training centre. We are certainly powering ahead in North Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.