



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

**Health and Environment Committee, Report**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.45 pm): As chair of the Health and Environment Committee, I rise to support the 2023-24 estimates report on the Appropriation Bill 2023. With the indulgence of the House, I wish my daughter, Ashleigh Kate, a happy 16th birthday. It is unbelievable that she was just seven when I started here.

As chair of the Health and Environment Committee, I want to start where the member for Redlands and my fellow chair left off. Good, appropriate conduct and respectful behaviour should be the core principles we adopt in this House and in estimates. Sadly, the standard I saw through some of the estimates process was at times disgraceful and unacceptable behaviour by some of the LNP opposition members. I am glad my fellow chair kicked the member for Kawana out because what we just witnessed in this House with the nasty interjections by the member for Kawana, who always goes low with personal attacks, demonstrates why people tune out to politics. The standard needs to be lifted.

I thank all members of the Health and Environment Committee, visiting members and members of the opposition—yes, even the member for Mudgeeraba—who were far better behaved this year and only needed to be warned twice. Let the record show that. My intention was to allow as much time as possible for the opposition and crossbench members to ask questions. As chair, I did set the tone of how I wanted the day to run. I am pleased to report that it went quite well.

Here is the evidence of how it panned out. All up, non-government members had four hours and nine minutes to ask questions versus government time of two hours and three minutes. To further put that into perspective, non-government members asked 197 questions and government members asked only 33. I question the Leader of the Opposition saying in this House this morning that chairs were running a protection racket. I completely disagree with that. Let the evidence show that this was not the case with the Health and Environment Committee. I hope we can continue to run a similar estimates process next year.

I want to talk about the record investment in health and ambulance services, particularly in my hometown of Townsville and my electorate of Thuringowa. Some \$538 million for the Townsville University Hospital will provide an additional 143 beds. There is \$40 million for my electorate of Thuringowa for the new build of the Kirwan health campus, which is due for completion next year. I

know the hardworking, dedicated health staff will welcome that new build. There is a funding agreement of nearly \$7 million for operational costs for the 24-bed Yumba-Meta step-down health facility located on Riverway Drive. I want to thank the health minister and the housing minister for getting together and working that out.

I must mention more funding for additional staff, allied health workers, nurses and doctors, and record incentives to attract health workers to rural, remote and regional Queensland to keep pace with our growing and ageing population, which is placing more pressure on demand for health services. Let's not forget the 2,200 additional beds funded under the Queensland Health Capacity Expansion Program—\$9.7 billion over six years.

Record funding of over \$700 million has been allocated to address ramping in Queensland as yet again we have seen over a million calls for service to the Queensland Ambulance Service throughout the state. That has a huge impact on our dedicated, hardworking dispatchers and paramedics throughout Queensland. It was great to see investment in 200 additional ambulance staff, further funding for 144 new ambulance replacement vehicles and new stations such as the one at Burdell—one of Townsville's highest growth areas—and that build is well and truly underway.

When we compare the record funding for health infrastructure and more staff to the LNP years of slashing funding and sacking nurses, we are poles apart because a good Labor government cares and backs our frontline health staff. We do not sack staff.

I have run out of time for the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, but it went well. They have record funding of \$789 million and total expenses of \$913 million, which is an increase of \$38 million to support reef protection and the Indigenous land and sea rangers who are doing awesome work in North Queensland.

I looked at the Education, Employment and Training Committee's statement of reservation and it is almost word for word with the Health and Environment Committee's statement of reservation. I think the opposition could do a little better with their statements of reservation and not copy and paste. I support the report.

*(Time expired)*