




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 12 September 2024

**PROGRESSIVE COAL ROYALTIES PROTECTION (KEEP THEM IN THE BANK)
BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.32 pm): I rise to speak on the Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill 2024. Our government introduced this bill because the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP cannot be trusted with our progressive coal royalties. They have made previous public statements criticising our progressive coal royalties. The Leader of the Opposition and the LNP have not released their tax policy. The Leader of the Opposition, the shadow cabinet and the LNP held 33 meetings with coal industry interests from March to July this year. The Queensland Resources Council continues to fund a huge \$40 million ad campaign against progressive coalmining royalties that give money back to Queensland and Queenslanders. Given this, it is my view that the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP cannot be trusted with progressive coal royalties—the royalties that build hospitals, roads and schools and fund vital cost-of-living relief. All of that is at risk under the LNP.

I listened to the member for Burdekin rant during his contribution. He says that we are not investing money back into the regions. What a load of rubbish! We have invested \$500 million in the Haughton upgrade; nearly \$300 million on the road upgrade north of Townsville; a couple of hundred million dollars west on the Flinders; \$280 million on the ring-road stage 5; and \$95 million on Riverway Drive stage 2. Then there is investment in water security and hospital upgrades. Nearly \$2 billion worth of road infrastructure has gone in and around Townsville. The member for Burdekin is not a very effective member if he thinks we have not invested in road infrastructure. We certainly have. We have invested a lot more on the back of coal royalties.

For decades Queensland has been home to world-class, high-quality coal. Our coal sector has underpinned the prosperity of our state, particularly in regional areas, contributing significantly to local economies and providing countless jobs. Between mid-2021 and 2023, Queensland's coal producers experienced unprecedented gains from surging global coal prices, leading to record export values. In 2022, the value of Queensland coal exports soared to an astounding \$83.5 billion—more than double the value in 2021. Even though these prices have normalised, the coal sector has contributed \$10 billion in royalties for the 2023-24 financial year. This revenue has been crucial in tackling cost-of-living pressures, funding essential public services in health and education, and supporting critical infrastructure projects such as CopperString. CopperString is a \$6.2 billion investment in North Queensland funded by those royalties from the north-west of our great state. It will unlock around \$50 billion worth of other minerals so that we can bring manufacturing back to our state.

Lansdown—40 kilometres outside of Townsville—is the battery manufacturing future of Townsville. It will support thousands of jobs. I do not know how many times I have asked the member for Burdekin whether they will back CopperString. All I have heard is crickets. Not one LNP member has had the intestinal fortitude to get up and say they will back North-West Queensland and CopperString. Those opposite are silent because they have no interest in north-west regional

Queensland. Well, we do, and we are backing it with one of the biggest pieces of nation-building infrastructure that will support a thousand jobs and unlock thousands more. This is great for Queensland.

Mr Walker interjected.

Mr HARPER: That is right, member for Mundingburra; it is all about being a Queenslander. The LNP are absolutely quiet. Why will they not answer the question? I say to the Leader of the Opposition: man up. Say that you will back North Queensland. Say you will back CopperString. I will ask the shadow Treasurer right now. None of the members of the LNP have said that they will back it.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member for Thuringowa, I bring you back to the long title of the bill.

Mr HARPER: I get a little passionate, because I love our community and I want to see the reinvestment of progressive coal royalties in regional Queensland, where it is deserved. I back this bill and commend it to the House.