



Speech by

JEFF KNUTH

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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GUMLU

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—ONP) (7.16 p.m.): I would like to talk about a small farming community in the south of my electorate of Burdekin, the town of Gumlu. It is a lovely little town with a population of a couple of hundred people with about 40 horticultural farms. It is also a fantastic fishing spot and an ideal area in which to raise a family. However, Gumlu has a serious problem: it has no water. Because it is close to the coast and strategically situated on low-lying flat lands, it has a salt watertable close to the surface. It has no major dam or weirs, nor has it any creeks or rivers with any usable water. One may ask how the farmers water their crops. Every farm has its own small dam. Although those dams hold out from wet season to wet season, they cannot cater for the bad seasons. In drought years, these farmers face dire consequences. The soil at Gumlu is second to none; it is rich and fertile. Crops such as zucchini, capsicum, tomatoes and rockmelons can be grown all year round, which is a major export advantage in a world affected by seasons.

Eighteen years ago, the Government of the day gave the green light to a project known as the Elliott Channel water diversion. That diverts water from the massive Burdekin Falls Dam, or Lake Dalrymple as it is known, through an irrigation channel stretching some 50 kilometres or more linking up to a dry river called the Elliott River. After about eight kilometres or less, the project was stopped and 18 years later still sits in limbo. With the groundwork already done on this project, it would be a shame to let it sit any longer. This area has the potential to generate billions for Queensland, like the rest of the Burdekin, which is the wealthiest community per capita in Australia.

A Government member interjected.

Mr KNUTH: I might do that. Currently, Gumlu generates \$60m, even with no water. With water, this area has the potential to expand to a population of 4,000 people. Gumlu, like the towns of Ayr and Home Hill, is ideally situated for potential expansion. I have invited the Minister for Primary Industries to travel to Gumlu and talk to the farmers about their concerns on this project. The Minister has accepted my invitation, and I thank him sincerely. I have also invited the Minister for Natural Resources and I await his reply.
