




Speech by

Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Thursday, 31 May 2012

DISCOVERY COAST, FLOODING

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.07 pm): I rise to highlight the issues of the communities of Agnes Water and the Town of 1770 which continue to suffer massive economic hardship when on a regular basis roads including Fingerboard Road are flooded every year. Agnes Water and the Town of 1770 business association Discovery Coast Tourism and Commerce, the DCTC, has completed a comprehensive survey of local businesses to quantify the loss of revenue.

Katherine Mergard and the committee are becoming increasingly concerned about the ongoing ramifications that the Discovery Coast community endures every time Fingerboard Road is closed due to flooding. The committee has raised these issues with all levels of government and with me many times, and I am happy to represent this great community in this place. The survey data provided on the basis of a conservative estimate was \$1.7 million per annum in direct economic loss to the Agnes Water and Town of 1770 communities. When this figure is added to the Gladstone Regional Council's estimate of its average annual cost of \$700,000 to repair the local flood damaged roads, it brings the total cost to \$2.4 million—thus an estimated loss of \$26 million is generated over 10 years on present values. Moreover, this calculation does not include factors such as the inability of children to access schools, the cost of medical emergencies, losses incurred by stranded tourists and the consequent damage of Agnes Water's and the Town of 1770's tourism brand.

I quote Katherine Mergard from Discovery Coast Tourism and Commerce. She said—

The numbers are not pretty, but at least we know the extent to which Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy is suffering due to the flooding ... Now hopefully governments will act sooner rather than later.

The estimated cost of \$10 million to \$12 million to floodproof Fingerboard Road—and therefore provide all-weather access to the area—demonstrates that the benefit gained by undertaking the capital works is substantially greater than the cost of not floodproofing Fingerboard Road. This equation becomes even more pronounced when you consider that Agnes Water and the Town of 1770 is almost totally dependent on tourism and now also provides a range of accommodation options for people working in Gladstone. As we all know, there are issues surrounding accommodation in Gladstone so it is extremely important that the workers are at least able to participate in the activities of employment in this important sector.

I raise these issues on behalf of the DCTC and the community of Agnes Water and the Town of 1770 to highlight the real need and the need to commit the necessary funding to upgrade Fingerboard Road and floodproof Agnes Water and the Town of 1770.