



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Bowen, Food-Processing Plant**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.52 pm): I take this opportunity to inform the House of a major economic development and job creation project in Bowen. I have proposed the construction of a food-processing facility or cannery at Bowen to capitalise on the enormous volume of fruit and vegetables that are produced in this region. This is no ordinary cannery.

What I am proposing is a five-star green facility that will produce products such as tomato paste and powder, vitamin supplements and puree to satisfy the insatiable worldwide demand for these products. Already there is overwhelming interest from local growers and the big Australian supermarket chains which gives added weight to calls for this project to be delivered.

On 21 October I hosted an industry and stakeholder forum in Bowen to discuss the potential development of this facility. This is about looking outside the square. For too long Bowen and Collinsville residents have relied on the resources industry to prop up their economies. This is a project that is financially viable and will provide much needed jobs for the region.

The development of a sustainable agribusiness food-processing plant for the Bowen and Burdekin region is part of a much bigger plan I have for my electorate. I hope it is also high on the agenda of the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland and the Minister for State Development because this is a project that meets all the criteria announced by this government over recent months. It also falls within the ambit of the Australian government's *White paper on developing Northern Australia*.

The Bowen-Gumlu area is the largest winter-growing region in the country, contributing more than \$400 million to the \$9 billion Australian horticulture sector. This region has produced \$412 million worth of fruit and vegetables per year for the past five years. That includes \$183 million worth of tomatoes each year, \$103 million worth of capsicums and \$68 million worth of beans. Other crops which could be processed at this facility include mangoes, corn, zucchinis and chillies. It beggars belief that Bowen is the largest tomato-producing area in Australia and yet canned tomatoes are being imported from overseas.

There are over 550 canneries in the world, but only three have actually locked in 100 per cent of their local supply. Of all the fruit and vegetables produced in our region, there is a volume of waste products which could ideally be processed for export and also be sold on domestic markets.

Our hardworking growers are actually creating a long-term strategy to expand and secure their industry into the future. This value-adding initiative would make a significant difference to the local economy. If this government is serious about their so-called investment in agriculture and jobs, a food-processing plant in Bowen simply must happen.