




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Townsville, Regional Export Distribution Centre

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.00 pm): I rise to support the call for a regional export distribution centre to be established in Townsville. The aims of the export distribution centre initiative and the dream to realise the potential of Northern Australia can and will be achieved by the creation of the distribution centre in North Queensland. In less than 10 years the agribusiness industry has grown by almost 50 per cent. Currently North Queensland has a strong horticultural industry. However, so much more can be achieved with the more productive supply chain that enables efficient delivery of product.

Today's release of the feasibility study into the Hells Gates Dam feasibility combined with studies currently underway into the Urannah Dam and the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam wall will prove that the development of up to 80,000 hectares of additional irrigated land in the Upper Burdekin and Collinsville areas will support high-value agriculture products for the export market. The creation of a regional export distribution centre in Townsville will allow for the full leveraging of the most productive agricultural region in Northern Australia. Townsville is ideally located to provide a centralised, multifaceted freight distribution solution. The presence of Queensland's second largest port and an international airport with wide body aircraft landing capability positions North Queensland in a unique position to support regional producers in their quest to deliver high-value products to international markets.

Currently, products grown in the North Queensland region are harvested, aggregated and transported out of the region for accumulation and sale into the domestic market or prepared for export. This results in increased transport costs and does little to support job creation in North Queensland, where it is so desperately needed. North Queensland is proactive in ensuring that more food produced reaches consumer plates, increasing return on investment to the producer, boosting agricultural contribution to gross regional product and reducing food waste. Development of a regional export distribution centre will provide benefits for a wide range of industries, not just agriculture. It will provide the impetus for new industries and the full development of burgeoning industries such as aquaculture and other high-value horticulture.

Townsville is the most viable option for maximising the state's export potential. This critical investment decision must be based upon the long-term return on investment, not based on propping up other projects. The allocation of this grant will act as a critical stimulant, delivering growth and efficiencies to the North Queensland agricultural sector. It will provide the catalyst for commercial investment, job creation and market connectivity. I urge the government to consider these factors when making its decision and to finally realise the potential of North Queensland.