




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2018

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Far North Queensland, Flood Mitigation

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (2.48 pm): Last week, along with Minister Crawford, I met with flood affected residents in Innisfail. I know that his presence in the Far North was appreciated by the community. The damage bill to homes and industry is estimated to be in the millions, with agriculture and fisheries severely impacted. Residents are now fearful of another big flood. It is time that we start looking at long-term solutions to manage our wet seasons. We need to start appreciating the opportunities to harness a precious resource like water rather than let large volumes flow through our communities as a destructive force. This is always going to be a region that experiences extreme weather and consecutive governments have failed to apply themselves to providing our communities with long-term solutions.

Instead we have had politicians come up and promise that they will be the ones who will deliver on big infrastructure projects, which everyone from Canberra to Cape York knows are needed, yet after the election the major political parties and their promises disappear for another three years.

One project that would harness this resource, which requires little funding and has reasonably low environmental impacts, is the North Johnstone transfer. This scheme would have minimised flooding in Innisfail and lifted the Tinaroo Dam levels well above what they are now. The North Johnstone transfer is a project that provides a win-win for the whole region. A weir which is engineered to trigger only at flood levels will be constructed at the site identified in order to flood, harvest and maintain underground water supply. Harvesting floodwater to divert it to the Tinaroo Dam would not only protect against the heartbreak caused by the destruction of homes and businesses on the coast but, just as importantly, it will ensure long-term water security for irrigators on the Tablelands and a safe lake for recreational users and visitors when they come to our beautiful region.

This is not a new project. It was designed during the construction of the Tinaroo Dam because engineers acknowledged that Tinaroo's catchment was not large enough to maintain adequate dam levels. The North Johnstone project was designed to help supplement water supply during periods of low rainfall. This project provides a sensible approach to flood mitigation and harvesting to address both flooding and drought issues in the north, which severely impact our communities and the long-term viability of businesses. If done right it will not affect irrigators on the coast, as it would only harvest excess water that would have run out to the reef anyway.

Our extreme weather events are a huge cost to our region not just in damages but in lost opportunities. Because our resources are not managed with the appropriate infrastructure, we lose investment opportunities and tourist dollars as floods destroys industries and low rainfall creates uncertainty. This project is simple. After five consecutive years of low water levels in Tinaroo, which

have resulted in restrictions on water usage and closure of the lake to recreational users, the time has never been better for this government to stand up and say that they are the ones to build something that will provide water security, boost the economy and minimise flood damage, particularly in the Innisfail area. I call on the state government to invest in the future of the Far North Queensland region and progress with the North Johnstone transfer as a matter of priority.