



Speech By  
**James Lister**


**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Granite Belt Irrigation Project**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.42 pm): I rise in the House to speak about the Granite Belt Irrigation Project, which is a transformative project that we are advancing in Southern Downs on the Granite Belt.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** I take the interjection from my honourable friend the member for Clayfield. He knows the importance of this project. We want to build a dam on the Severn River to capture water to make the horticultural industry on the Granite Belt come alive. We are experiencing very difficult times at the moment. We have irrigators who are trucking water. They hire 30,000-litre water trucks and drive up and down the highway with water to water their crops. That is quite extraordinary, and it shows you just how valuable water is on the Granite Belt.

We produce \$300 million at the farm gate every year in horticultural produce. I would love to tell my friend the member for Lockyer that that is even more than his electorate produces. We are summer producers and we can access markets elsewhere in Australia that other people cannot, so it is very good. It is very lucrative and there are lots of jobs and prosperity. This project will produce 300 full-time-equivalent jobs on the Granite Belt; a \$65 million increase—and that is a conservative estimate—on horticultural production; a 40 per cent increase in the amount of water available for horticulture; and a 20 per cent, or 273-hectare, increase in the amount of land cultivated. There is land there that is cleared but there is not water at all times to farm it. We know these things because a detailed business case has been done by the Stanthorpe and Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce with funds happily donated by the federal government under the National Water Infrastructure Development Scheme.

This dam will be a template for dams of the future. It aims to get away from the vagaries of the weather and provide certainty for irrigators who produce such high-value crops. It seeks to use green technology—solar power—to pump water from the dam to a high point and then siphon it from there, which I think is fantastic. One of the really important things is that this is very innovative in that, under the Moonie water plan, the water rights will be leased from traditional owners and the community purposes allocation, and this will enable funds to be held in trust for the Indigenous owners of that water, which I think is fantastic.

The Granite Belt depends on water. It produces so much for the little water that it uses because leafy green vegetables—tomatoes, capsicums and those sorts of things—are grown very efficiently. We need this water in order to grow and protect the Granite Belt, the major town of Stanthorpe and surrounding villages from the terrible economic effects of the drought we have at the moment. The main street in Stanthorpe is suffering, the growers have their tongues out and the workers and families of the Granite Belt are struggling. This project, which we need the state government to come on board with with a little bit of funding and some further approvals, will make a real difference to my constituents in Southern Downs.