

Gilbert River Irrigation Project

Qld Plan Foundation: Community, Regions, Economy, Environment, People, and Infrastructure

State Electorate: Traeger

Federal Electorate: Kennedy

Council: Etheridge Shire Council

Priority Recommendation/s

For information.

Project Overview

The Gilbert River Catchment in the Gulf of Savannah region of Northern Queensland has long been identified as being suited to irrigated agriculture.

Soil and land assessments have identified 28,564ha of irrigable land along the Gilbert River inside the proposed irrigation area (further irrigable land exists downstream).

The 2013 CSIRO report: Agricultural Resource Assessment for the Gilbert Catchment (Petheram et al 2013) provides a wealth of technical support.

Key project elements include:

- Gulf region projected to have steady/increased rainfall through climate change
- Historical trials coupled with current dryland and irrigated cropping activities demonstrate cropping viability and suitability for a range of diverse crops
- Irrigation area highly suitable for establishment of an organic precinct
- Early cropping season opens up market windows and opportunity for premium prices
- Opportunities to integrate cropping activities with, and add value to, the established beef cattle grazing industry
- Proximate to Asian export markets and counter seasonality with agricultural production in Asia
- Relatively low environmental impact (including no impact to the Great Barrier Reef)

Council in partnership with Dept. Agriculture and Fisheries, University Southern Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, AGForce and a number of commercial interests have also applied for funding through CRC NA to establish a Research Facility in the Gilbert River Irrigation Area to promote a strategic focus on the broad acre cropping (Grans and Fodder) sector in Northern Queensland.

Key Strategic Drivers

Economic	Predicted gross benefits from agricultural production in the region of \$540million Transport and logistical activity will spread benefits across the State and region
Social Enterprise	Project will encourage Indigenous people to return to country and be an integral part of the opportunities on offer.
Employment	Total agribusiness development to create upwards of 500 permanent jobs and many more casual and seasonal jobs
Tourism	Dam creates opportunities for recreation and tourism ventures