MEDIA RELEASE  
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Urannah Dam feasibility funding secured  

The Urannah Dam, northwest of Mackay in Queensland, is one step closer to reality today with the Prime Minister announcing $3 million under a returned Coalition Government for a feasibility study.

The feasibility study will be undertaken by a consortium comprising community economic development group Bowen Collinsville Enterprise Inc. and Brisbane based public-private partnership and venture capital group Initiative Capital, with the support of the traditional owners group, Urannah Properties Association.

Bowen Collinsville Enterprise (BCE) and its predecessor the Collinsville District Development Bureau have been driving this project since 1992. Their water projects coordinator, David Evans, believes the planning, design and feasibility studies will advance the project to a point where a proponent can confidently take the project forward to construction and full development.

“The strategic location of the Urannah Dam site between Mackay and the Whitsundays will allow the project to service a range of current and future water needs and development opportunities in Central and North Queensland. These include a 12,000+ hectare agricultural area at Collinsville, water for the Whitsundays, the Abbot Point State Development Area and high value horticultural producers at Bowen, the Bowen and Galilee Basins, and the development of a base load power station at Collinsville,” Mr Evans said.

“This is all part of a plan to diversify our economy which has been heavily impacted following the downturn in the mining construction boom,” Mr Evans said.

“In the current age new water projects relying totally on agriculture will continue to struggle. It is important that new developments incorporate a wide range of high value industry users to achieve and maintain long term economic viability,” Mr Evans said.

BCE Director, Dave Nebauer, said that unlike other proposals the Urannah Dam Scheme is not a remote area project that would require significant overhead infrastructure.

“It is unique in that it is close to key established industries that are planning for growth. This strategic benefit was identified in the 2001 Burdekin Basin Catchment Study which found the Urannah Dam Scheme to be the most viable new water storage opportunity in the entire Burdekin Catchment at the time,” Mr Nebauer said.

Mr Evans congratulated the Federal Government for its long term vision and initiative in establishing the Northern Australia Infrastructure Development Fund.

“For the last 20 years following the completion of the Burdekin Dam Project new major water infrastructure development has been off the agenda at both a State and Federal level. The opportunities for new industry development in Northern Australia are exciting and we are confident our region will play a significant role in these developments” Mr Evans said.

CEO of Initiative Capital, John Cotter, said his firm was excited to be managing the feasibility study.

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“The Urannah Dam offers huge economic benefits for agricultural development and the development of Northern Australia,” Mr Cotter said.

“The most exciting aspect, however, is that the project is bringing together community stakeholders, traditional owners and private financiers in a unique partnership,” Mr Cotter said. “If the project progresses, it will be the first of its kind.”

Urannah Dam will also potentially be Australia’s 503rd dam, with no new dams developed since Wyaralong in 2011. Only two dams were developed in Queensland in the preceding decade, compared to 20 in the 1980s and 15 in the 1990s.

The dam would cover 16% of the surface area of the Burdekin Falls Dam, while holding around 80% of the capacity.

Future stages of the dam could allow for capacity of over 1,500,000 mega litres. This is equivalent to 600,000 Olympic swimming pools, or 3 times the capacity of Sydney Harbour.

“The Urannah Dam has the potential to be a game changer for Northern and Central Queensland. The feasibility study is another step in the process of turning this vision into reality,” Mr Cotter said.

Bowen Collinsville Enterprise Inc. was established in 1998 by local industry leaders to develop an Economic Development Strategy for the Bowen Shire and continues to make a significant contribution to Regional Planning Studies in the Whitsundays and Central and Northern Queensland.

Initiative Capital is the only venture capital firm in Australian specialising in public-private partnerships. Initiative Capital will be the project managers for the feasibility study.

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