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Ord East Development Plan Video Transcript

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Ord East Development Plan Video Transcript

In the far north of Australia is the East Kimberley, a region of rugged land forms and steep majestic mountain ranges. Kununurra is the region's town centre. The community was settled in the nineteen sixties to service a bold irrigation project; the Ord River Irrigation Scheme. The initial part of the scheme, Ord Stage One, required the construction of a small diversion dam on the Ord River. The expansion of this scheme, Ord Stage Two, required a much larger dam on the Ord, some fifty kilometres upstream from Kununurra. The Ord river dam was completed in the early nineteen seventies. Lake Argyle was created as a result; a huge man-made lake holding nearly eleven thousand gigalitres of water. That's around ten times larger than Sydney Harbour. Over thirty years later, after several false starts, Ord Stage Two has never been developed until now. The Ord East Kimberley Development Plan is finally here. This exciting project is a partnership between the State of Western Australia and the Commonwealth Government. It delivers two key benefits, irrigated agricultural land and social infrastructure and services to support the development. Both governments view the expansion plan as a means to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Miriuwung and Gajerrong peoples, the traditional owners of the land. The project offers tremendous scope to create training, employment, contracting and business opportunities for local communities. The Commonwealth Government is supporting the development of this region through an investment of one hundred and ninety five million dollars. Fifty million dollars will go towards health, sixty four million dollars for education and training, fifty million dollars for housing, fifteen million dollars for transport and sixteen million dollars towards community projects and new offices for indigenous groups.

Fourteen thousand hectares of land are now under irrigation. The blue line [appearing on screen] indicates the location of the existing irrigation channel, the M1. Some ninety five million dollars worth of farming produce is sold every year to local, national and international markets. Agriculture in Kununurra also has distinct seasonal advantages. Due to the warm tropical climate, summer crops such as mangos and melons can be produced during the winter months and since it's located in the southern hemisphere the region is counter seasonal to the northern hemisphere for many of the tropical crops such as citrus and fruits. Kununurra growers enjoy another natural advantage. The main growing months from May to September are mostly rain free so crops are less at risk from rain damage and disease. The Western Australian Government is investing two hundred and twenty million dollars from the Royalties for Regions program to increase the land under irrigated agriculture. The project will focus on developing eight thousand hectares of land on the Weaber Plains; around twenty two lots ranging from fifty to six hundred and fifty hectares will be available. The land will be serviced by an irrigation channel and an adjacent road providing road access and irrigation water right up to the farm gate. The yellow line [appearing on screen] indicates where the new irrigation channel the M2 will be built along side the access road to the area. Other services and infrastructure for Weaber from land clearing to telecommunications and reticulated power are being discussed under an extensive community consultation process. The State Government will also be progressing approvals for a further three parcels of land, Ord West bank, Packsaddle and Mantinea totalling another six thousand hectares. Beyond this project, other land parcels such as the Knox Creek Plains show potential for future development. The State and Commonwealth Governments both share a vision of creating a vibrant, regional centre in the East Kimberley. This emerging development will be supported by agriculture, mining and tourism and ensures the indigenous community of the region shares in this prosperity. With the growing scarcity of water in the south of the state, opportunity for the north looks bright, the timing couldn't be better for such a nation building project. One that will allow the East Kimberley region to reach its full potential.