

SUNSHINE COAST DEVELOPS MODEL FOR DELIVERING BETTER BROADBAND TO COMMUNITIES

Queensland’s Sunshine Coast Regional Council has formed an innovative partnership with its local education sector, technology providers and other levels of government to install high-speed broadband infrastructure within the region. As the council’s **MICHAEL WHEREAT** writes, the project is expected to significantly enhance the Sunshine Coast’s economy and could serve as a model for other regions.

The Connecting the Coast project is facilitating connectivity to high-speed broadband to institutions, health-care providers and the general community in a partnership that secured over \$11 million in funding for much-needed new broadband infrastructure on the Sunshine Coast.

This initiative has delivered the infrastructure and is now operational across the Sunshine Coast, focusing on delivering services to our business, education and health sectors.

Over 15 years, there could be as much as \$311.7 million injected in to the Sunshine Coast economy as a result of the Clever Networks Project.

Connecting the Coast is a public-private partnership with direct investment from the Commonwealth Government, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast, Allegro Networks and Mach Technology, with in-kind contributions from Matthew Flinders Anglican College and Reed Property Group.

Home-based businesses, commercial business, education and health providers are now able to access a range of service solutions from Allegro Networks as council’s telco partner.

Mach Technology is providing a range of data security, web and server hosting, along with other related solutions for the Sunshine Coast region from the Cooroy Data Centre.

The University of the Sunshine Coast now has a dedicated fibre connection to the Australian Academic Research Network.

This will enable the university to become part of the international university research community in a way that has not been possible in the past.

The education sector at a secondary level is also able to access this network and this is demonstrated by Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Noosa District High School, Immanuel Lutheran College and Pacific Lutheran College being customers on the network.

Lessons for other communities

With the council’s completion of this project it has learnt valuable lessons that could be applied around the country.

The network consists of a 155 Mb/s optical fibre cable following the train line from Brisbane with a 29 km



Optical fibre conduit being installed on the Sunshine Coast.

connection from Palmwoods to Maroochydoore and a 5 km connection to Cooroy, and seven wireless WiMax base stations.

Council and its partners had to build the network from scratch because it could not access optical fibre previously laid down by telecommunications companies.

After having to dig up roads to put in the cables, the council is urging engineers to lay down telecommunications ducts whenever they build a new road or repair an existing one.

The council is starting to require developers to incorporate optical fibre in all greenfield developments.



Council's Division 12 and economic development and council entrepreneurship portfolio holder, Cr Lew Brennan, said "Connecting the Coast has developed more reliable and efficient telecommunications infrastructure that better supports local business and innovation on the Sunshine Coast".

"In October last year, Senator the Honourable Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy, visited Cooroy in the Noosa Hinterland to formally 'switch on' Australia's first successfully completed clever network broadband project," Cr Brennan said.

"We are well in advance of the requirement for all local governments to have the optic fibre capability embedded in their master plans by July 2010.

"Sunshine Coast Council has already included the requirement in the Sippy Downs Master Plan as well as in the draft Palmview, Maroochydore & Caloundra South structure plans. As a result, the next 100,000 in population that move to the Sunshine Coast will benefit from world-class high-speed Fibre to the Premises from day one.

"The combination of wireless and fibre optic cable provides network security, with the capability to reach over half of the Sunshine Coast population and around 38,500 businesses in the region."

Project benefits

Outcomes the council has achieved from Connecting the Coast:

- Drive choice and increased broadband and internet solution capability with a focus on business and home-based business in the Sunshine Coast region.
- Deliver a critical enabler of the growing knowledge economy.
- Help small and home-based business operate like big business.
- Build world-class telecommunications infrastructure on the Coast.
- Ensure the community has real options for competition and next generation services.

Council recognises that the Sunshine Coast economy can no longer rely on a few population-driven industries.

The policies, principles and strategies of the region's former councils, state and federal government agencies and the region's leading institutions have consistently promoted a concerted effort to move the Sunshine Coast towards more knowledge-intensive, high value and globally competitive economic activities.

The project aligns with:

- Council's draft Sunshine Coast Telecommunications Roadmap and Action Plan 2009-2010.

- Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2014.
- Queensland Government Rural Futures strategy.
- Federal Government National Broadband Network Greenfields policy.

Key issues and opportunities for the Sunshine Coast in transitioning to a digital economy include:

- Under-provision of broadband infrastructure in new commercial, tourism and residential developments.
- Substantial mobile phone and ICT 'black spots'.
- Lack of competitively priced, high speed (next generation) broadband.
- Uncertainty surrounding the current and future role of council in providing high-speed broadband infrastructure.
- Efficiency of amalgamating the region's two Clever Networks projects.
- Broader issues hampering the development of knowledge industries on the Sunshine Coast such as available land and accommodation, skills shortages and user market-awareness.
- Local businesses have consistently identified current broadband infrastructure and cost as limiting their capacity for growth.

Within this context, supporting the knowledge economy is essential to the region's future prosperity.

Resolving issues of connectivity - in terms of internet access and stakeholder relationships - is the essential element of the Connecting the Coast project and will contribute to reducing the local economy's reliance on more traditional industries, such as retail and tourism.

The need to form partnerships

Council identified that collaborative partnerships involving stakeholders from the development and telecommunication industries and all user group sectors were required to deliver a Next Generation broadband network.

Individually, the organisations now partnered in Connecting the Coast had insufficient resources or motivation to pursue any significant improvement in internet services for the local area.

The process of community consultation and investment partnering not only linked often competing public and private interests but allowed resources to be pooled successfully to the optimal benefit of both investors and the broader community.

Connecting the Coast fulfils the needs of service providers, achieving more for the public and private partners as a connected group than they could have individually.

This integrated approach to the development process and the delivery of new telecommunications infrastructure, while being unique for this kind of development project, addresses a common problem for regional economies where the market-forces do not provide the desired outcome for communities.

Council has implemented and continues to implement planning scheme amendments, policy and supporting documentation relating to telecommunications to benefit in excess of 100,000 new residents to the region.

For the first time, city-scale telecommunications infrastructure will be solely based on optic fibre to the premises using open-access and world class standards.

Connecting the Coast offers tailored solutions to regional problems, delivering world-class, high-speed broadband at metropolitan prices.

For the council, Connecting the Coast represents a new way for local government to secure investment in regional infrastructure.

Connecting the Coast clearly demonstrates the effective role councils can play as visionaries and leaders, by connecting federal and local levels of government, together with regional organisations across education, health, business and the general community, to facilitate an improvement to local area services.

– Michael Whereat is Principal Economic Development Officer – Telecommunications at Sunshine Coast Regional Council. To obtain further information on product offerings or the Connecting the Coast project visit www.connectingthecoast.com.au or email Michael Whereat via michael.whereat@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Australian Private Equity & Venture Capital Guide 2009 16th EDITION

Australian Private Equity & Venture Capital Guide 2009

Sixteenth Edition

By Adrian Herbert



The Australian Private Equity & Venture Capital Guide (previously the Australian Venture Capital Guide) is now available.

The 2009 Guide is an invaluable reference for identifying sources of private equity and venture capital funding in Australia and New Zealand.

Published by Private Equity Media, the Guide provides contact details of a wide range of funds and other investors plus details of capital available and investment preferences.

A total of 165 Australian and New Zealand private equity and venture capital firms are listed. A further 28 other sources of business funding are also listed. The Guide also includes full details of 19 managers of infrastructure investment funds. All entries have been revised and there are many changes from last year.

The Guide includes a fully revised introductory section outlining the private equity and venture capital raising process for capital seekers.

While the Guide includes Australian offices of overseas-based managers that invest only in large deals, most of the listings are local firms that primarily invest in Australian and New Zealand businesses. These managers each have their own specific investment ranges covering from less than \$100,000 to in excess of \$1 billion. The Guide identifies these ranges plus the industry areas and business stages preferred by each organisation.

This information enables capital seekers to target their efforts at the appropriate investors for their business.

The 2009 Australian Private Equity & Venture Capital Guide is available in print form or as an emailed PDF for \$100 including GST, or as a 12-month subscription to a regularly updated online version for \$200.

To order, visit: www.privateequitymedia.com.au or telephone 03 8534 5000