Normanton to Karumba Fibre Optic Project

Northern Australia Priority: Our Business, Trade and Investment Gateway / Infrastructure to Support Growth.

State Electorate: Traeger   **Federal Electorate:** Kennedy

Council: Carpentaria Shire Council

Priority Recommendation
FNQROC supports Carpentaria Shire Councils $2.89m project to enable Karumba to receive internet and mobile services to mitigate the digital divide .

Project Overview

The Critical Need for Improved Telecommunications Infrastructure in Karumba
Currently Karumba receives its internet and mobile services via an ageing radio network that links Normanton to Karumba via two radio transmitters. Council has been looking into various ways to solve the critical telecommunication issues faced by Karumba for a number of years. Essentially there is no more bandwidth nor is there available backhaul to increase it. This means that mobile and internet access will continue to be slow and unreliable in the absence of any intervention.

Put simply without the intervention Karumba (and its residents) will continue to have no ability to take advantage of a suite of technologies and applications that will generate revenue for business; create jobs; reduce business operating costs; and deliver high-quality education and health-care services.

The laws of physics will not allow these problems to be solved by upgrading the existing radio infrastructure in Normanton and Karumba.

Developing the Most Appropriate Solution
Council sought to identify the most sustainable and the most viable solution where long-term sustainability and viability are concerned, all research indicates that fibre optic infrastructure was the only satisfactory technology for meeting the current and future telecommunication needs.

Fibre optic network is the only technology capable of delivering the bandwidth necessary for the high-content applications (video-conferencing, medical imaging, cloud-computing) that will drive business efficiencies and enable the delivery of high-quality government services now and into the future.

Extensive consultation has also taken place with the community, which resulted in strong support for this project. Local business operators were also requested to gauge their views on the telecommunications issues they face and the potential impacts of improved telecommunications on their operations.

A failure to act in delivering this much needed infrastructure will continue to exacerbate the digital divide experienced in Karumba, stifle economic growth and job creation and consign businesses and residents to ongoing business inefficiencies and access to substandard government services.

Project Outputs
Carpentaria Shire Council is prepared to contribute $1.15m to the $2.89m project which consists of 70.4km of fibre optic cable, upgrading the Karumba Exchange to be ADSL2+ capable, and upgrade the Karumba mobile tower to enable 4G mobile services. Construction/installation will be facilitated through an Enterprise Works Agreement with Telstra and expected to take around 100 days to deliver.

Normanton to Karumba Fibre Optic Project (Cont.)

Project Outcomes

The installation of fibre optic cable between Normanton and Karumba, with associated upgrade to the Karumba telecommunication exchange and tower will result in the following outcomes:

- Increase average length of tourist stay and average expenditure amount;

- Increased tourism-related revenue for local businesses;

- Create potential for job growth in tourism sector;

- Increase property valuations;

- Increase rates revenue;

- Provide operational efficiencies for businesses, Council and government service providers (Health, Education)

- Increase quality of health care services available by accessing specialist medical services via telehealth arrangements:

- Increase quality of education available to state school, School of the Air and tertiary level students:

- Improved disaster resilience of telecommunications infrastructure;

- Provide future-proof telecommunications infrastructure;

- Deliver long-term infrastructure/service upgrade with no ongoing maintenance or operational costs to Council;

- Improve quality of tourism and events experiences through provision of Wi-Fi hotspots;

- Reduce disincentives to relocate to Karumba.

Key Strategic Drivers

Economic	Identifies the strategic policy, projects and investment required to support continued economic growth and activity.
Social Enterprise	Establishes a shared vision in support of improved quality of life for the community.
Employment	Provides foundation for a strong economy supporting ongoing employment opportunities and growth.
Tourism	Establishes a shared vision for continued regional tourism branding and diversification.