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New era for Sunshine Coast fibre optic and wireless network connectivity means business

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Three years in the making, a new multi-million dollar telecommunications network providing unsurpassed wireless and broadband services for the Sunshine Coast region was officially declared complete and 'open for business' this week by Sunshine Coast Mayor, Bob Abbot, and Queensland Senator Mark Furner.

The launch was held at the Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim, as the school is one of the first in the region to use the new technology.

Speaking at the launch, Cr Abbot said the end of the Connecting the Coast project is an incredibly important step forward for telecommunications and business on the Sunshine Coast.



Bob Abbot.

"This is the result of a successful public and private partnership between Council, the University of the Sunshine Coast, Allegro Networks and the Commonwealth," Cr Abbot said. "It has been an outstanding effort from all involved."

About \$2.9million in funding was raised by the three Sunshine Coast-based entities with the Federal Government also contributing \$2.9million to the project. Matthew Flinders Anglican College and the Reed Property Group are in-kind project partners and have provided practical demonstration case sites for the technology.

The new 29.5km, optical fibre link and wireless base station network provides high quality, ultra high speed, business grade broadband access to over 50 percent of Sunshine Coast businesses, educational facilities and health sector service providers.

The network spans a connectivity area of 800sqkm. After years of slow or no-access broadband 'black zones', the new technology means that the region can now compete with its metropolitan counterparts on an international level in with broadband speed, service and price.

The technology will also permit increased business use and productivity and has paved the way for new telecommunications carriers to enter the market offering more value and choice for residents.

Council's Economic Development and Entrepreneurship portfolio chair, Councillor Lew Brennan said the Connecting the Coast project was a great example of how the region identified an issue, rolled up its sleeves and found the people, expertise and funds to get the job done.

"With the help of our project partners, we now have a truly competitive, world-class, open-access wireless and broadband network service which means increased educational, business, research and employment opportunities for the region," Cr Brennan said.

Cr Brennan made special mention of Council's Manager of Economic Programs, Michael Whereat who had successfully managed the project over the past three years.

"Council is now planning fibre optic capable communities, where this kind of infrastructure is in place before the development proceeds," Cr Brennan said.

"Examples include the Maroochydore CBD, the Sippy Downs education and knowledge precinct, Palmview master planned community and the already completed Reed Property Group's new RIVA apartment block."

Senator Furner was delighted to be part of the launch and said this infrastructure was a definite boost to the region.

"There is a direct correlation between high levels of broadband penetration and significant economic, social and community benefits to communities," Senator Furner said. "These benefits include better access to research facilities for the university and its ICT Learning Innovation Centre provides smart classrooms with access to videoconferencing, streaming rich media, pod casting and the use of VoIP.

"GPs will now also be able to securely and quickly transfer data between hospitals, allied health radiology and pathology and the Sunshine Coast will become an even more attractive area for start-up technology based businesses."

The 29.5km fibre optic cable extends from Palmwoods through Sippy Downs to Maroochydore and connects through to Brisbane via the rail corridor under an agreement with Queensland Rail. It extends from a point of interconnect in Brisbane's CBD to eight Sunshine Coast-based wireless base stations (licensed as WiMax) which facilitate broadband access to an area of over 800sqkm.

Optical fibre performance is constantly monitored and in the unlikely event of a breakdown, provides automatic backhaul to Brisbane, meaning no loss of service or data.

Allegro Networks, as the private telecommunications partner to the project, is responsible for the network operations, maintenance and the business grade products to suit the Sunshine Coast business community.

The University of the Sunshine Coast's Innovation Centre, Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Immanuel Lutheran College, Pacific Lutheran College, Noosa District State School, St Michael's College Caboolture, and Sunshine Coast Radiology Practice are all founding customers of the new technology.

For further information about Connecting the Coast project and its advantages for the Sunshine Coast contact: Michael Whereat, Manager Economic Programs, 5441 8481 or 0439 750 107.

www.connectingthecoast.com.au



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