

12<sup>th</sup> February 2010

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Region Bids for Early Rollout of NBN

The Regional Economic Development Corporation (REDC), in conjunction with the three Councils (Mackay, Whitsunday & Isaac) today announced their intention to present a business case to the newly formed NBN Co for early rollout of national broadband across our region.

In 2009 the Australian Government announced the establishment of a company that will invest up to \$43 billion over the next eight years to build and operate a wholesale-only, open access National Broadband Network (NBN) providing ultra high-speed broadband via optical fibre to the home and workplace (FttP) to 90% of the population, with the remaining 10% serviced by next generation wireless and satellite technologies primarily covering regional and rural areas. The Councils are keen to see our region rolled out at the front end of the 8 years.

REDC CEO Narelle Pearse, said that high speed connectivity is vital to support growth in the region, and that high speed broadband is the new critical piece of infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The digital age is upon us and we need to ensure that our region stays ahead of the game. It's not just about faster internet - high speed broadband will mean faster, cheaper and more reliable communications, bringing with it, significant improvements in the delivery of regional health and education services. Businesses will benefit from increases in productivity, and for a region that struggles with skills shortages, it will provide opportunities for knowledge transfer and remote working that will underpin strong future growth throughout the region.

The bid for early rollout of the NBN being led by the Regional Organisation of Councils within the region, will be in the form of a business case to be presented to NBN Co. The business case will demonstrate that not only do the councils fully support the NBN initiative, but as a result of the preparation of a Regional Telecommunications Master Plan, they are well informed of currently available fibre and wireless technology, as well as future development needs and planned capital works that can assist the broadband rollout by reducing costs and speeding delivery of services.

Mackay Regional Council Mayor Col Meng knows that Councils need to take hold of this digital revolution, particularly in regional areas.

The tyranny of distance means that business people spend a significant amount of time travelling either within the region or to other parts of Qld and Australia which results in lost productivity. High speed broadband will allow for cost effective real-time videoconferencing, which will also be available to our residents which will allow them to strengthen and maintain their social networks.

Countries such as Japan, South Korea and China are investing heavily in fibre infrastructure to support their growing take-up of leading edge digital technologies, and Australia, through the NBN initiative by the Australian Government will need to move rapidly to match these important trading partners through significant increases in connection speeds up to 100Mbps.

The M-W-I region's annual contribution to the Nation's economy is now \$17.3 billion, resulting in significant revenue to the Government. The Mayors believe that the early rollout of the NBN in our region would show a strong commitment and acknowledgement from Government for the role that our region plays in Australia's current and future prosperity.

-ENDS-

#### Media Contact

Ashleigh Howland 4953 2655

