



Connectivity city maps path to high-value jobs

Region's internet link would support a new CBD and tech-hub

ANNE-LOUISE BROWN

The Sunshine Coast intends to become Australia's next technology hub and is proceeding with plans to install the country's newest submarine internet cable link and to develop a hi-tech town centre.

Leading the push is Sunshine Coast Council Mayor Mark Jamieson, who believes the region northeast of Brisbane is well located to provide an additional gateway and greater reliability for Australia's internet connectivity.

Currently, five international submarine cables provide data connectivity from Australia to the rest of the world. Four land in Sydney, and the fifth in Perth.

According to Jamieson, the proximity of the four existing cables in Sydney poses "a single point of failure" risk for Australia's existing commercial data centre capacity.

"The Sunshine Coast provides the first viable alternate landing point on the eastern seaboard of Australia for a cable that links us to the rest of the world — and it is 1000 kilometres closer than Sydney," he says.

"We have the perfect marine typography and the ability to provide a safety valve for the rest of the eastern seaboard if something goes wrong in Sydney. It's advantageous from a local, state and national per-

spective."

Support had come from the Queensland Government, the Queensland Opposition, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Council of May-

ors (South East Queensland) and the Australian Local Government Association, he says.

Jamieson says the plan could have a transformative impact on the Sunshine Coast and broader southeast Queensland economies, with the cable a catalyst for attracting technology businesses and associated high-value jobs.

The federal Department of Communications and the Arts has provided funding for a feasibility study for the international broadband submarine cable, to be completed this year.

The SCC has mapped a potential route for the submarine cable for an overseas link, and has lodged a submission with the Australian Communications and Media Authority requesting initiation of a declaration for an offshore-cable protection zone as part of the process.

If realised, the project could inject \$700 million annually to the Sunshine Coast economy and \$1.1 billion annually to the Queensland economy, it is claimed.

It would also complement the development of Maroochydore's greenfield CBD and tech-hub, SunCentral, a \$300m project that is already under way.

The 20-year CBD project is predicted to create more than 5000 jobs by 2020 and a further 15,000

by 2025, boosting the Queensland economy by \$350m by 2020.

The 53-hectare CBD will comprise retail and commercial premises, a five-star hotel, convention and entertainment centre, light rail and lakes and parks.

Central to the development of the "smart" CBD is the installation of technology and environmental innovations, such as what is said to be Australia's first underground rubbish collection system.

Developed by Swedish company Envac, the vacuum system sucks rubbish underground through street and residential inlets into a 6.5km network of underground pipes at 70km/h. It lands in a central holding area, where it is collected by rubbish trucks.

"We are applying our smart-city framework to create a city for the future and a stable bedrock for our new-tech economy," Jamieson says.

SunCentral chief executive John Knaggs says it "will unlock the region's true potential".

"This project will generate thousands of construction jobs, more than 15,000 permanent jobs and provide a \$4.4bn boost to the local economy," Knaggs says.

"The new city centre will be a base for major employers as well as a hub for start-ups — all within a liveable city centre that is just minutes from an international airport and beautiful beaches," he says.

"The project has already secured interest in multiple lots from global infrastructure and property development giant John Holland."

A deal could include construc-



tion of the new Sunshine Coast Council headquarters and teaching facilities and student accommodation for the University of the Sunshine Coast, he says.

“We believe this is one of the most exciting urban developments in Australia and the market response to date certainly appears to support that view,” Knaggs says.



Mark Jamieson