Driving internet connectivity in the bush

For rural and remote communities, the lack of a decent internet service is among the major frustrations for both businesses and the broader community.

In South-West Queensland – some 550 km from Brisbane - the Balonne Shire Council is tackling the problem head-on.

The Shire's approach involves the construction of backbone infrastructure and technology to deliver internet connectivity to the shire by utilising existing grain silos and water towers together with new 45m towers.

Council has sourced $2 million in grant funding with the project to initially be constructed over three stages taking in the communities of St George, Dirranbandi, Hebel, Thallon and surrounding landholdings.

Funding is also being sought to extend the project to Bollon and to connect to the Moree Shire through the border town of Mungindi.

Once each stage is complete, the infrastructure will be owned and operated by the chosen network operator, Field Solutions Group, who will provide wholesale broadband to internet service provider retailers.

Council is seeking a connectivity solution to enable internet service providers to offer plans to 100/100 mbps, and potentially much higher, and with unlimited data plan options for residents, business and industry, inclusive of agricultural businesses.

Negotiations are continuing with landowners for the location of the towers, which are expected to be built by March 2021. There will be 12 towers/silos forming the network in the first three stages.

Stages 3 and 4 of this project were funded by the Australian Government's Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

Further funding for other stages of the project has been provided by the Queensland Government's Building our Regions Program.

Balonne Shire will utilise existing grain silos and water towers plus 45 new towers to deliver fast internet out west.

New tool shows how trenchless technology cuts carbon emissions*

Key players within the water sector have united to tackle industry emissions by using a specialised carbon calculator.

Tailored to the water industry, the tool is designed to inspire construction contractors to find innovative ways to reduce their emissions through trenchless technology and build a brighter future.

Living in the age of climate crisis

In an era where 94 Australian councils, home to over 34 percent of the population, have declared climate emergencies, it is now critical for them to embed environmentally conscious decision making into their infrastructure planning.

Specialist in water infrastructure, Interflow, has collaborated with the Australasian Society of Trenchless Technology (ASTT) and engineering consultancy, Mott MacDonald New Zealand, to give all ASTT members access to a specialised carbon calculator.

The calculator will enable water authorities, local councils and engineers to easily compare trenchless solutions to conventional 'dig and replace' methods, providing them with the power to make more informed decisions when designing their water solutions.

A sustainable solution

Interflow's Environmental and Sustainability Manager, Anthony Ogilvie, explains how the calculator would work in practice.

"It will compare the efficacy of trenchless technologies with traditional 'dig and replace' methods and also help asset owners to choose between the growing selection of trenchless technologies."

Interflow renews a series of culverts in environmentally sensitive area.

Environmental and Sustainability Manager, Anthony Ogilvie.

By saving the time and costs associated with excavation, trenchless technologies are quickly becoming the preferred construction methods of choice for councils and water authorities across the globe.

"Interflow has been a market leader in water infrastructure solutions since 1936. It seemed only right that we helped the ASTT collaborate with its members to develop a tool that empirically showcased the environmental benefits of trenchless technology."

The ASTT has approved the business case and is currently working to make the tool available to its members. Learn more at interflow.com.au.

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