

7 September 2018 – General media release

New international broadband cable delivers Australia's fastest communications to Asia

Australia's fastest telecommunications connection to Asia and second fastest to the United States will occur from the Sunshine Coast, thanks to a new international submarine cable contract that has been agreed between Sunshine Coast Council and RTI Connectivity Pty Ltd (RTI-C).

Sunshine Coast Council is the first local government in Australia to secure an investment in an international submarine cable and in an increasingly digital world, the value of this investment for the region's future cannot be understated said Sunshine Coast Mayor Mark Jamieson.

"Without a doubt, this infrastructure investment will result in significant point of difference for the Sunshine Coast," Mayor Jamieson said.

The project includes a 550km kilometre undersea fibre optic cable that will connect the Sunshine Coast to the 9600 kilometre Japan-Guam-Australia South (JGA-S)* submarine cable that is currently being delivered by a consortium involving RTI-C.

At Guam, the JGA-S cable will connect to the SEA-US Cable System, a highly efficient Trans-Pacific cable which will forge connections between South-East Asia and the United States for more than 1.5 billion people.

The \$35 million undersea connection from the Sunshine Coast to the JGA-S cable is being jointly funded by the Sunshine Coast Council and the Queensland Government, with the project forecast to deliver up to 864 new jobs and stimulate \$927 million in new investment in Queensland.

"The Sunshine Coast will provide the fastest, most affordable international connection point for Queensland and Australia to Asia, providing a significant step-change to Queensland's attractiveness as an investment location.

"This project will stimulate investment and jobs growth on the Sunshine Coast thanks to the superior telecommunications connectivity and data infrastructure and could serve to attract some of the world's biggest data users to our region.

"This game-changer will transform the Sunshine Coast and open up enormous opportunities for Queensland."

Australia's existing international submarine cables currently land in Sydney and Perth.

The majority of data and voice communications currently travels from Queensland to Sydney via land, before heading to its international destination through submarine cables.

"People don't realise that every time you make an international phone call or transfer data overseas, every time you search Google, every time you like something on Facebook, it doesn't go through a satellite," Mayor Jamieson said.

"In fact, 99 per cent of Australia's international voice and data traffic travels via submarine cables.

"To have all Australian east-coast international cables landing in Sydney is not only more expensive, it's a huge business and national security risk if those cables are damaged at the same time."

Mayor Jamieson said the international submarine cable – which would connect to a new cable landing station near the Maroochydore City Centre - would increase data transmission speed, provide greater redundancy and should over time, lead to a reduction in international communications costs for business and consumers.

"New cables and new technology have tended to drive down prices and create a more efficient environment," Mayor Jamieson said.

"Our ratepayers will also benefit from the agreements we have reached with RTI-C because council will receive a revenue stream from customers accessing the JGA-S cable network through the Sunshine Coast cable connection.

"Once again, our council is at the forefront of thinking outside the square, securing new revenue sources and pursuing opportunities to generate economic and employment growth as a major dividend for our residents, thus ensuring we continue to be Australia's healthy, smart, creative region.

"It also fulfils another key commitment I made in the lead up to the 2016 local government election.

"Arguably, the submarine cable will be the leader in our suite of game-changers for this region.

"Our Sunshine Coast Solar Farm – which was another local government first; our Sunshine Coast Airport Expansion project; and the Maroochydore City Centre – Australia's only greenfield CBD and about to become Australia's fastest CBD."

Mayor Jamieson also acknowledged the support of the Federal Member for Fairfax, Ted O'Brien, who has been a long standing supporter of this project and who helped secure \$250,000 in funding from the Commonwealth Government for a feasibility study for the submarine cable project in 2016.

RTI CEO Russ Matulich said the investment by the Sunshine Coast Council and the Queensland Government placed the Sunshine Coast on the business map of the world.

"Businesses need the fastest communications path between two locations," Mr Matulich said.

"They need the ability to store data and this new cable, and the landing station at Maroochydore, will enable this to happen.

"The Sunshine Coast cable is in an outstanding location because it provides physical diversity – a new location into Australia – which is a high priority for government and commercial reasons.

"This new path will deliver traffic into and out of Australia faster than the Sydney route because it is geographically closer to mainland China and Hong Kong, where there are 1.1 billion people; to Japan where there are several hundred million people; and to the west coast of the United States where big companies such as Facebook, Google and Amazon are located.

"Compared to other destinations, the Sunshine Coast project is one of the few cables that will be able to reach into those big cities over one network – RTI's network."

Mr Matulich said the international submarine cable would also benefit small business because it provides better connectivity, speed and redundancy and encourages new companies to look at the Sunshine Coast to take advantage of the connectivity to international communications infrastructure.

"The whole community wins because they are getting the residual benefit of big investment coming into the region.

"International submarine cables impact economies by increasing communications, trade and education. The higher the number of cables, the higher GDP per capita.

"And the more cables landing in a specific location improves the quality of life, not just for the local citizens but for the nation."

The submarine cable is expected to be installed by the first half of 2020.

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Notes to editor:

RAM Telecom International (RTI) and RTI-Connectivity Pty Ltd (RTI-C) are leading neutral cable owners and develop global telecom infrastructure and large-scale data connectivity in selected markets.

RTI and RTI-C offer their neutral products and services to international telecommunications carriers, multinational enterprises, global content providers and educational institutions. RTI is headquartered in San Francisco, California and RTI-C is headquartered in Singapore.

RTI currently leads a consortium which is undertaking a submarine cable project connecting Japan to Sydney via Guam (JGA-S). Council will have a submarine cable branch connection to this cable, landing on the Sunshine Coast.

*The Japan-Guam-Australia-South (JGA-S) submarine cable project is due to be completed in 2019. The Sunshine Coast cable will connect with the JGA-S cable.

Due to the direction of the cable from Sydney to Japan following a mostly north to south path, the cable will be laid closely parallel to the east coast of Australia up to South-East Queensland. The branch connection from the cable length from the Sunshine Coast to the main cable will be approximately 550 kilometres.

The first submarine cables carrying telegraphic traffic were laid in the 1850s, initially across the English Channel connecting the United Kingdom to the rest of Western Europe. Later, in the 1860s, cables were laid across the Atlantic Ocean connecting North America to Europe reducing communications time from 10 days — the time it took a ship to sail across — to minutes, via telegraphic messaging.

Today fibre optic cables carrying digital traffic as light-waves have replaced copper telegraphic cables, not just for submarine cable systems, but the majority of terrestrial systems.

Global telecommunications carried on fibre optic submarine cable systems represent as much as 99% of all telecommunication traffic today, whereas satellite links carry less than 1% of global traffic.

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