

MEDIA RELEASE

The “black hole” in digital communications in Bulman, a town of around 300 people on the Central Arnhem Highway, is to be discussed at a high level meeting between Telstra, Roper Gulf Shire, Sunrise Health and key service organisations in Bulman this coming Wednesday.

The Mayor of Roper Gulf Shire Mr Tony Jack will be attending this community consultation meeting with representatives from Telstra, Roper Gulf Shire, Sunrise Health, Police, Education Department, the Northern Lands Council and community members.

The lack of a mobile phone service in the town also places extra pressure on services organisations to provide telephone service for people to conduct daily business. The three public phones in Bulman, Weemol and Mount Catt are rarely operable and outside business hours it is almost impossible to find a public access phone. This has a serious impact on emergency response times. A mobile service would also allow for the establishment of a mass warning system in the event of emergency events and a general information service.

Bulman sits in the middle of a corridor linking Katherine and Gove and stands to benefit from increased business and tourism particularly if the proposed Northern Australian gas pipeline is constructed. This being greatly restricted by poor communications. Dale Campbell has been busy advocating for better communications to Bulman. He has been attempting to coordinate Telstra with the proposed \$900m gas pipeline works to see whether the pipeline could also be used to carry a fibre-optic cable to improve communications to Bulman. Fibre Optic cabling to Bulman will alleviate much angst in this area of telecommunications.

Mayor Jack described the town’s electronic communications as,

..substandard even by bush standards... the current poor level of communications in the town is a serious concern to all and greatly restricts daily operations and impacts on all residents”. “This part of the bush is missing out on services most of Australia takes for granted and the community safety, health and education implications are significant”. “As the National Broadband Network is being rolled out across Australia, Bulman does not even have a basic reliable service and what is there is regularly down or in crisis”. “We feel this part of the bush may have been forgotten when the NBN roll out and the health and education revolutions were being planned”

Bulman is located approximately 350 kilometres east of Katherine on the Central Arnhem Highway. The road beyond Beswick is unsealed and may require 4wd. Road conditions and closures should be checked before driving during the wet. The meeting will be held on Wednesday 13th February at 10:00 in the Shire Services Centre Bulman.

For Further details or to arrange interviews with Mayor Jack please direct your inquiries to Michael Berto CEO
Roper Gulf Shire Council
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