

MEDIA RELEASE

Roper Gulf Shire Mayor calls for co-location of fibre optic cable in new gas pipeline.

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Roper Gulf Shire Mayor Tony Jack has welcomed the recent announcement from Pacific Alumina and the NT Government that they are planning to start construction of a gas pipeline across the top end from Port Keats to Nhulunbuy. A large part of the proposed pipeline is to follow the Central Arnhem highway over a distance of 300 kms through the Roper Gulf Shire passing close to the towns and communities of Manyallauk, Barunga, Beswick and Bulman and a number of large pastoral properties.

Mayor Jack has used the announcement to call for Government and Telstra to seize the opportunity and co-locate Fibre optic cabling in the construction trenching. "This would provide substantial cost saving and open these small communities to the communications superhighway that much of the rest of Australia take for granted" he said. The building of the pipeline offers opportunities for local employment and a once in a generation opportunity to upgrade infrastructure along the route of the pipeline.

Mayor Jack pointed out that, "Some of these small communities are communication black holes that currently leave hundreds of our residents vulnerable and very isolated, something that would not be accepted in the rest of Australia."

"In many of these towns the question is not how fast the NBN will make our internet but will we ever get internet or mobile coverage at any speed. Most of the services out here are dependent on satellite phone for day by day operations. This is not good enough".

The Roper Gulf Shire and other local services have been lobbying Telstra and the Federal Government to upgrade communications along this corridor for some time. The response has largely been negative claiming that the construction costs are prohibitive for such a small population.

"Here is a once in a generation opportunity to undertake this work", Mayor Jack said.

Mayor Jack congratulated the NT Government on their recent announcement on funding to improve mobile coverage and some fibre optic upgrades in a number of NT communities including Ngukurr and Numbulwar but added that there are still a number of communities that still have third world communications and called on the Government and Telstra to seriously look at this opportunity and continue this rollout along the Central Arnhem towns and communities.

For further details, please direct your inquiries to:-

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