

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Investment in heavy vehicle infrastructure seals road to Barunga growth**

Roper Gulf Regional Council has committed to investing in infrastructure that will both provide a solution to heavy vehicle traffic management concerns and pave a pathway to economic stimulation in Barunga.

The Council announced this week that it had been successful in securing \$283,800 through the Northern Territory Government's Regional Economic Infrastructure Fund to construct a private access road for trucks entering Barunga, approximately 80 kilometres east of Katherine, to deliver freight to the community store.

Heavy vehicle movements within the community have long been a cause for concern for residents and Council staff, with truck drivers currently required to navigate around pedestrian traffic and passenger vehicles before parking outside the entrance to the shop to unload.

With an upgraded \$1.5 million store due to be built in the community in coming months, the Council's Director of Council and Community Services, Sharon Hillen, explained that the private access road – which will link up to Council-operated local roads in Barunga – would allow heavy vehicles to stop and unload safely behind the new facility.

“One of the town priorities for the Barunga Local Authority is to address traffic management issues in the township, and one of the highest priority areas is the congestion around the store,” she said.

“We recognised the coming and going of heavy vehicles, and the unloading of food goods and freight, has not only ripped up the Council's road, but it's also creating even greater danger to pedestrians and other vehicle traffic.”

Mrs Hillen said that the Council was supportive of developing Indigenous businesses and thanked the NT Government for its foresight in approving the funding for a project that would not be controlled by the Council.

“The REIF funding covers the construction of the road on land that does not belong to the Council, and the Council will then connect that system to our road network,” she said.

“What we're building is a private access road, and will be up to Outback Stores to maintain.”

Outback Stores have partnered with the Aboriginal Investment Group (AIG) to construct the new facility through Federal Government funding.

AIG Chief Executive Officer Steve Smith said the project aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives of fostering economic development, social dividend and community benefit in remote Indigenous communities.

"Working with Outback Stores and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on this will assist in developing Barunga's economy," he said.

"This is about long-term community participation and investment in the store."

Council CEO Michael Berto said the organisation was proud to be involved with delivering infrastructure for Barunga that would make a significant difference to its economic potential.

"Council is the Roper Gulf region's biggest advocate, and part of that involves ensuring our communities receive the financial support required to drive growth and unlock development opportunities," he said.

"This road is a much-needed piece of key infrastructure for Barunga that most people living in urban areas around the country would take for granted."

The Council will consult with the community about the private access road over the next few months, with works scheduled to commence during the 2017 dry season.

**END**

**For further information, please contact the Communications  
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