

Media Release 11 July 2017

RAPAD launches Regional Digital Strategy *Smart Central Western Queensland: A Digitally Enabled Community Strategic Plan*

To diversify the economy of the Central Western Qld region, increase liveability, strengthen the social fabric of the community and reverse depopulation, the Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) have produced the: *Smart Central Western Queensland: A Digitally Enabled Community Strategic Plan*

The Smart Central West Digital Strategy makes 42 recommendations, some of which the board has already commenced planning and implementing.

“While the digital environment has been an area RAPAD has focused on for many years, the development of this strategy raises the bar for RAPAD in its approach to facilitating and supporting economic growth in the region through the digital medium”, said Cr Bruce Scott, Chair of RAPADs Digital Reference Group.

“The Smart Central West Digital Strategy articulates a comprehensive but pragmatic plan to seize the region’s opportunities, mitigate the weaknesses, emphasise the strengths and avoid the threats”.

“This is a far reaching, and in parts, a challenging, strategy”, said Cr Scott, “and we need to harness the efforts of the entire region to ensure we move forward into the digital age”.

“The strategy prioritises initiatives in five focus areas currently articulated in RAPADs strategic plan”.

Cr Scott said that RAPAD had received excellent support from a range of stakeholders throughout the development of this strategy, along with RAPADs whole approach to this digital focus area.

“The Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation (DSITI) and the Department of State Development (DSD) have been highly supportive together with the Local Government Association of Qld (LGAQ)”, said Cr Scott.

“No matter who we have asked from the academic, private or public sectors, everyone has offered support”, said Cr Scott.

Mr David Arnold, CEO of RAPAD said that the April 2017 *Transitioning Regional Economies Initial Report* released by the Productivity Commission highlights that remote and very remote regions tend to have relatively low adaptive capacity.

“Digital enablement is one tool to enhance a regions adaptive capability. The strategy itself focuses on the economic development of the region, and the advancement of those five focus areas, using digital technology as an enabler to allow the region to access the

 (07) 4652 5600

 info@rapad.com.au

 117 Eagle Street | PO Box 592
Longreach Q 4730

 @RAPADCWQ

 Like us on Facebook

benefits at a lower cost, to ensure that a broader market can be reached and to enable better collaboration between the region, its councils, and its business sector”.

“In many cases the projects outlined in the Smart Central West Digital Strategy have both digital and non-digital components. The non-digital components recognise that, to ensure success, an increase in the demand created by digital means must be met by an increase in supply”.

“Elements within this strategy are designed to complement the activity of State and Federal Government’s policy goals and objectives. The RAPAD approach is more localised based on direct community, business and visitor consultation”.

“All relevant social and economic strategies, plans and policies across all layers of government and industry bodies have been reviewed as part of the strategy development. The activities within this document offer greater value in a shorter timescale with the agility of local control. Moreover, this approach is based on the principles of the sharing economy as it seeks to share large amounts of data to underpin economic growth in the region”, said Mr Arnold.

In 2016 the board engaged consultants Glentworth to undertake the consultation and development of the strategy and in late 2016 they conducted community round-tables in Blackall, Barcaldine, Longreach, Stonehenge, Jundah and Winton. In addition, phone conferences were held with participants from Diamantina and Boulia Shires. While in the region Glentworth, facilitated by RAPAD, made a particular effort to speak to as many people as possible, including both tourists and locals. Glentworth also visited tourist drawcards to test the experience.

Mr Arnold said, “Glentworth spoke to over 100 people during the consultation period and in addition they undertook broad consultation with a number of people outside the region”.

Glentworth Executive Chairman Neil Glentworth said the strategy will ensure that the Central West region of Queensland can take maximum advantage of the rapidly changing economy.

“The fortitude and resilience of the region is truly inspiring. For Glentworth, it has been an immense privilege to support the digital journey.

“It is a ‘sleeves rolled up’ approach that, if fully implemented, will help all members of the community prosper socially and economically”, said Mr Glentworth.

The Smart Central West Digital Strategy was funded by RAPAD with support from the Local Government Association of Qld, and Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

The *Smart Central Western Queensland: A Digitally Enabled Community Strategic Plan* and community consultation report can be found at www.rapad.com.au .

Ends

Contact:

Cr Bruce Scott – 0427586902; David Arnold – 0428583301; Neil Glentworth 0439986801