

OUTBACK COMMUNITIES AUTHORITY - NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2012

GRAND ENTRANCE FOR LEIGH CREEK

The Leigh Creek Progress Association recently completed its town entrance project in conjunction with partners Alinta Energy, Department for Planning, Transport and Infrastructure's Planning and Transport Services Divisions and OCA.

Viesturs Cielens design, in association with John Nowland Design developed the concept for the town entrance with the aim of creating an interesting and inviting entrance and developing an individual style of town signage while revitalising the image of the town as a more 'open' and interesting destination.

The Leigh Creek Progress Association is to be commended on their pro-active approach to the town's community development. If your town is interested in developing a similar kind of entrance project and requires assistance, contact Outback Communities Authority for more details on getting your project up and running.



Upgrades Completed on Outback UHF Radio Repeater Network

A new UHF radio repeater has been installed on Bollards Lagoon Station and the Mungerannie repeater is now back working again.

The 32m radio mast and equipment were installed at Bollards Lagoon Station near Max's Bore in late July. The CH1 UHF radio repeater near the Strzelecki crossing was modified and a link antenna installed for communication with CH2 Bollard's Lagoon. Despite the distance between the two sites, good path signal strengths were achieved.

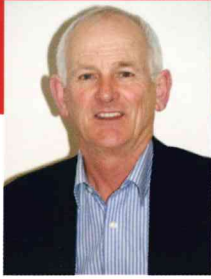
Coverage tests show continuous coverage between Cameron Corner and the Strzelecki Track turn-off, by either CH2 or CH1 repeaters. Corner residents have expressed their great appreciation for this service and have no doubt that it will significantly increase emergency communications in the district. Most remember how useful UHF CH1 was during the fires last year and recognize the value of enhancing the

communications with these linked repeaters, especially as we embark on another high fire danger risk period in the coming months.

Radio coverage tests were also completed along the Birdsville Track. The Mungerannie CH 2 UHF radio repeater once again neatly provides radio coverage in between the Dulkaninna CH6 and Cowarie CH4 UHF areas.

These projects were completed for OCA by Gambier Electronics with the assistance of Epic Energy, the people of the Corner region and the Birdsville Track. Many thanks to the people from Bollards Lagoon Station, Lindon Station, Merty Merty Station, Clayton Station, Dulkaninna Station, Mungerannie Station and Mungerannie Hotel.

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Chairman's Message

Now, in our third year of operation, having addressed many administrative responsibilities, the OCA's focus continues to shift a little to the big challenges and opportunities

that we see in the outback. The issue of access to the very best standards of high speed broadband for outback people is a good example. OCA's current Outback Broadband Project is all about hearing outback people's future IT needs and understanding and sharing information about the technology, including the limitations of satellite delivery. We also hope to identify any opportunities that show up out of the forthcoming NBN rollout. It is a fair bet that better knowledge of all the facts in this technically driven area will help to empower the community. Let's hope some real opportunities come out of it.

Bill McIntosh
Chairman



General Manager's Message

In early September the office for OCA welcomed it's newest staff member, Byron Gough, Governance Manager. Byron is known to many having come from the Crown Lands SA Port Augusta office. This new role will

oversee the implementation of OCA's Business Plan and the management of our policies and procedures, including their development and review. Byron brings a wealth of experience in land tenure management and government sector operations; valuable skills for OCA.

Recently the outback community lost one of our own in what were very tragic circumstances. Adam Plate, a long time outback personality, epitomised life and love for all things 'outback'. While it is true I did not always see 'eye-to-eye' with Adam's views and methods, I am genuine in my admiration of his passion and commitment to those things he believed in. The outback community comprises many and varied personalities; this is what makes it unique. With the passing of Adam a big piece of this unique character may have been taken away, however it will always be remembered. On behalf of OCA and staff, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the Plate family.

Mark Sutton
General Manager

OCA Explores NBN Opportunities

Noven Purnell-Webb from IT firm Magedata has been working with the OCA Board to advise on the opportunities presented by the National Broadband Network (NBN) rollout to outback SA communities.

Few in remote Australia will benefit directly from the NBN until 2015, when a dedicated NBN satellite is launched. Outback SA residents, already big satellite internet users, will be able to download more content, faster, for about the same price paid today. The opportunities, according to Purnell-Webb will be for remote businesses to list with services such as Google Maps, and be more visible in searches as travellers plan outback journeys while in the region.

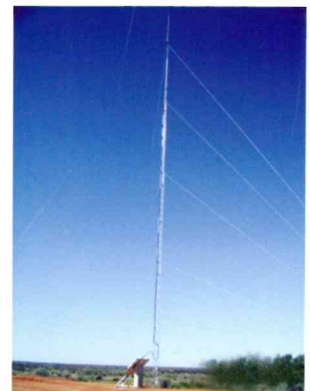
The need for more satellite installers to meet expected demand for satellite internet, will create a new business opportunity in the region. "Slow take up of new satellite broadband services won't be due to lack of providers, but the current lack of trained dish installers. It's a new business opportunity and a relatively easy, low-tech trade to learn," said Purnell-Webb,

While faster broadband and opportunities are positive, outback communities and industry hoping for improved face to face and real time video conferencing will be disappointed. "This is our main concern with the claims that satellite is sufficient for people in the outback," said Purnell-Webb. "For most people in the bush their frustrations are not about faster email, it's about how the kids can't engage properly in School of the Air. By the time they put their hand up to answer a question, the teacher has moved on."

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Upgrades Completed on Outback UHF Radio Repeater Network. Continued from page 1...

The Outback UHF radio repeater network is owned and managed by OCA, with the support of the outback community, for the benefit of all who live, work and travel through the outback. The OCA has a maintenance contract with Gambier Electronics who provide exceptional and timely support for the network. A new UHF radio repeater map is currently being produced and will be available in late September.



Workforce Challenges in Outback SA

It's no secret that regional areas struggle to attract and retain staff. Despite the perception most Australians have about the mining industry being a big employer, according to a federal report the largest employing industries in regional SA are Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (31,400), Manufacturing (23,100) and Retail Trade (21,500). Over the past year the largest numbers of new jobs in regional SA were in Accommodation and Food Services (up by 2400) and Administrative and Support Services (1900).

The *Australian Jobs* report by the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations shows that of the two employment regions in SA, the Northern and Western region (OCA's region) accounts for 9.2% of total employment in SA and with a 3.9% growth in employment in the past year, the north west (outback) region trumps the rest of SA.

A survey of outback SA businesses, undertaken for the RDA Far North's 2012 *Regional Workforce and Skills Project*, reveals up to 1281 new workers will be needed in the next 3-5 years. The report states "at least 80% of businesses struggle to find applicants with adequate qualifications and experience. All industry sectors engage people with levels of experience less than desired and (have) to train them".

Regional employers face recruitment barriers not faced by city counterparts, where educating jobseekers on the reality of regional living poses biggest challenge, according to a HR expert in the pastoral industry. "Many people, have rose-coloured glasses about working in the bush. When they confront the heat, isolation, slow internet speeds and few career paths we're lucky to get them for one year. That's a good result," he said.

The cost of losing an employee is around \$15,000 to a business, making it important for employers to get the right person in the job initially rather than having to repeat a costly process. Mainstream recruitment sites such as Career One and Seek fail to meet the needs of outback employers and cost time to filter through generic applications. Farming and tourism businesses are taking a more creative approach to recruitment, targeting graduates still at college and employing travellers passing through for short term work or on 457 visas.

Strategies to promote staff well-being can also increase staff retention. According to their newsletter, Douglas Lillecrapp from Todmorden Station teamed up with physio students from UniSA to create a handbook for station hands. Safety is also paramount in mining where safety-conscious workers are more attractive and less risky than inexperienced workers.

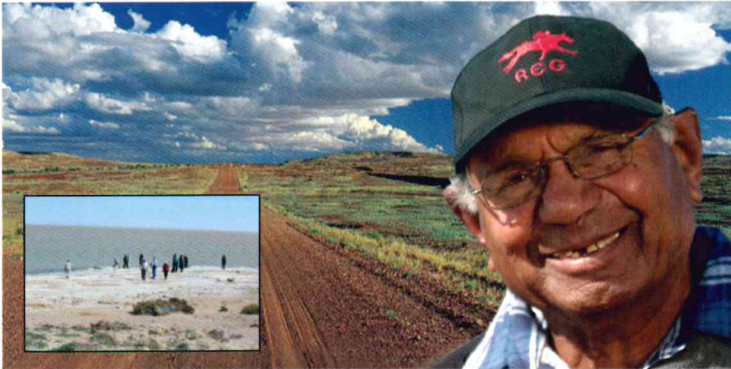
Mining is often finger-pointed as being a competitor for labor regionally, but this is disputed by the findings of a 2011 Australian Institute report into the myths and realities of the Australian mining industry. It states that Australians believe mining sector employs nine times more workers than it actually does and that "the mining industry has played a very small role in the growth in employment in Australia over the past seven years."

The resources sector is faced with similar barriers to workforce attraction as other outback industries. Resources Energy Skills Alliance (RESA) is overcoming barriers and misconceptions about working in mining via a new website. 'Hot Rubble' aims to be a first stop portal for jobseekers looking at mining jobs. "We now understand the market is national and job-seekers need a range of information to make decisions about the sector generally, relocating, minimum skills and career pathways," said Paula Bennett, Regional Manager at RESA. "Hot Rubble is our way of addressing common myths and misconceptions about mining employment so that we can focus on attracting skilled workers into the sector."

The Hot Rubble site will be launched by the end of the year and could be the blue print portal for other industries aiming to attract workers to outback SA.



Outback Profile



Name and role?

Reg Dodd, Coordinator of the Marree Arabunna People's Centre and President of Marree Progress Association

How long have you been living in the outback?

All my life, I was born here.

What keeps you here?

Well, it's home. I worked on Anna Creek Station and the railways until 1986. After the closure of the railways there was no way to communicate with the outside world so I started the Community Centre as a way to keep the communication in and out of town going.

What's your vision for your community?

We want to ensure our town has quality services like education and health. Our main aim is to ensure local peoples' needs are met. We ran a training program with Olympic Dam Transport for 8 trainees from Marree and now 5 have jobs, one at Arid Recovery, one is in Brisbane doing building.

What's the best and worst thing about living in the bush?

Living at home and freedom of movement you don't have in a town. Independence; you are the person making all the decisions. I can't see anything bad about living here. You can adjust to accommodate your needs. In four hours I can get to Melbourne via Roxby. You need to be creative to overcome obstacles, it opens up your mind.

What's the biggest change you've seen in the past 10 years?

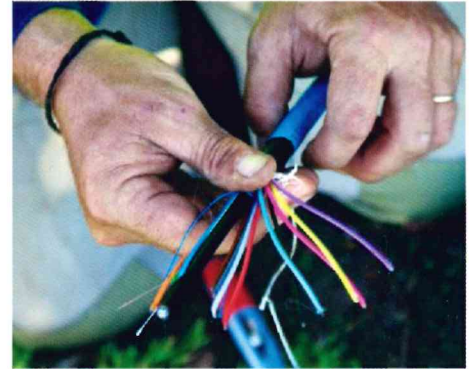
Seeing Aboriginal people get more involved in community decision making. Breaking down isolation through communication is the greatest thing. When we do tours we get all people from all walks of life; we had Nicole Kidman's parents out here on tour.

Most vivid memory, natural disaster, town event?

We had a rough time in 1995 with the development of Olympic Dam. It surprised us that such terrible things can happen in this day and age but they did, so we learnt a lot from that. We don't dwell on it and now we have a good relationship with BHP Billiton. But it was a big process.

Message for people new to doing business in the region?

It takes time. It's a big country out here and people expect you to be available at the drop of a hat. You have to take time. Working with communities you have to be transparent for projects to be successful.



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The remote health industry also relies on video consulting to assist regional GPs with clinical diagnosis. Time delays due to 'latency' make video conferencing less useful than imagined, at a time when health is forecasted to be a significant regional growth industry, according to RDA Far North's Workforce Skills Report.

So where to from here? The NBN is open to private network extensions and OCA will be looking at ways to build extensions into areas with low population where it is feasible to do so. This may be achieved by using a combination of community, public and private partnerships to improve business possibilities, connectivity and continuity of wireless services enjoyed elsewhere. Magedata is undertaking a feasibility study to look at the viability of alternative services and will publish more information online as it becomes available.

Further information will be available at:
www.outbackbroadband.org.au

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