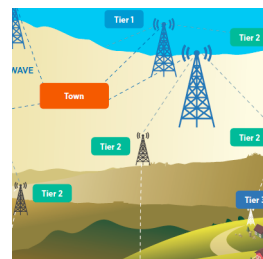## Stage 1 - Digital Connectivity Project   Update #1   18 Nov 2019

Balonne Shire Council is pleased to launch Stage 1 of the Digital Connectivity Project proudly funded by the Queensland Government's Building our Regions program.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the project about?	This project is Stage 1 of a strategic apporach to solving digital connecitivity issues in the Shire. It is the backbone infrastructure and technology to deliver internet connectivity into the Shire, that is, Tier 1 and Tier 2 towers (35m+) and asset re-use such as water towers and grain silos. Council facilitated the delivery of this project by sourcing funding and Council will provide overall project management and oversight. Once each stage is complete, the infrastructure will be owned and operated by the appointed telecommunications carrier licence holder (network operator), Field Solutions Group. The network will provide wholesale broadband to internet service provider (ISP) retailers[1] . Once the project is complete, Council does not intend to continue to be involved in the project infrastructure, however, Council will continue to work with businesses and other partners to build capacity to enable our community to realise the benefits of digital connectivity. **[1] More information will be availble regarding ISP retailers; there may already be fixed wireless solutions available to end-users (customers), or, other internet solutions available, customers will need to make their own decision on which plans and ISPs they want to utilise for their homes or businesses. STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES**
What are the confirmed stages?	Stage 1 – St George, Dirranbandi, Hebel and Thallon[1] Stage 3 – MDBEDP[2] defined areas (St George surrounds) Stage 4 – MDBEDP defined areas (Dirranbandi surrounds) [1] Final Stage 1 design (including tower-POP locations) depends on land access negotiations [2] MDBEDP – Murray Darling Economic Development Program (Federal Govt).
What about the other stages?	Grants are being actively sought for additonal stages.
What is the project value?	Stage 1 – $1 million grant + $1 million+ Field Solutions Group contribution.
Where will the towers be located?	Exact tower locations will be confirmed once site negotiations have been agreed. Towers/POPs will be both 'in' townships and 'out of town' on rural lands (as negotiated).
How long does it take to build the towers?	12 months approx. Expected Stage 1 completion is November 2020 approx.
What sort of "internet" solution is it?	Fixed Wireless in town, with rural point of interconnect (POI) network out-of-town. It can be described as "air-fibre", whereby optic fibre (accessed from the primary fibre location like St George) is then distributed via the key points of presence (POPs) around the Shire. The POPs are the towers (and infrastrucutre like water towers and grain silos) that have the technology to transmit the "air-fibre" to the desired location.

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What sort of plans are available?	A key criteria for the tender for this project was for the connectivity solution to enable the provision of high-speed plans (ie up to at least 100/100 mbps) and unlimted data plan options for business industry and growth, inclusive of agricultural businesses. Stimulating the ecnomomy was the key requirement from the Funder. Consumer plans for individual households with unlimited data will also be made available. Retail plans will be provided by approved internet service provider(s) i.e. ISP telcos. The customer will choose their own plans to suit their business needs. **More information will be availble regarding ISP retailers; there may already be fixed wireless solutions available to end-users (customers), or, other internet solutions available and therefore customers will need to make their own decision on which plans and ISPs they want to utilise for their homes or businesses. STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES**.
What about IOT and LoRaWAN® ?	The LoRaWAN® is not a 'connectivity solution'. Business needs now, and, into the future, may require a good, strong reliable connection, in addition to, LoRaWAN®. The LoRaWAN® specification is a Low Power, Wide Area (LPWA) networking protocol designed to wirelessly connect battery operated 'things' to the internet. FSG have advised they will encourage partnerships, with third party technology partners, to access the new infrastructure to provide further services to the community.
What if I am out of the "line of sight" of the tower / POP?	There may still be options for those locations that are out of the footprint covered by the towers / infrastructure. Additionally, Council continues to seek funding for parts of the Shire that are not covered in the currenlty funded stages.
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