

Close the gap on telco services

Anthony Anderson

An ambitious plan to help close the digital gap for Indigenous Australians with stronger and more reliable telco services has been launched by the federal government.

The First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan, launched on Sunday, aims to provide a framework for identifying priority actions for government, community, and industry to deliver reliable and affordable telecommunications services and appropriate training.

It comes as the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, released last week, found there remains a considerable digital gap between First Nations and non-First Nations Australians.

The new plan targets Closing The Gap Target 17: the elimination of digital inequality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

It will attempt to provide a holistic approach to tackling access, affordability, and ability to use digital services.

The plan is the culmination of two years of consultations, including six virtual roundtables with more than 100 participants, 11 one-on-one stakeholder meetings and 37 submissions to the consultation paper.

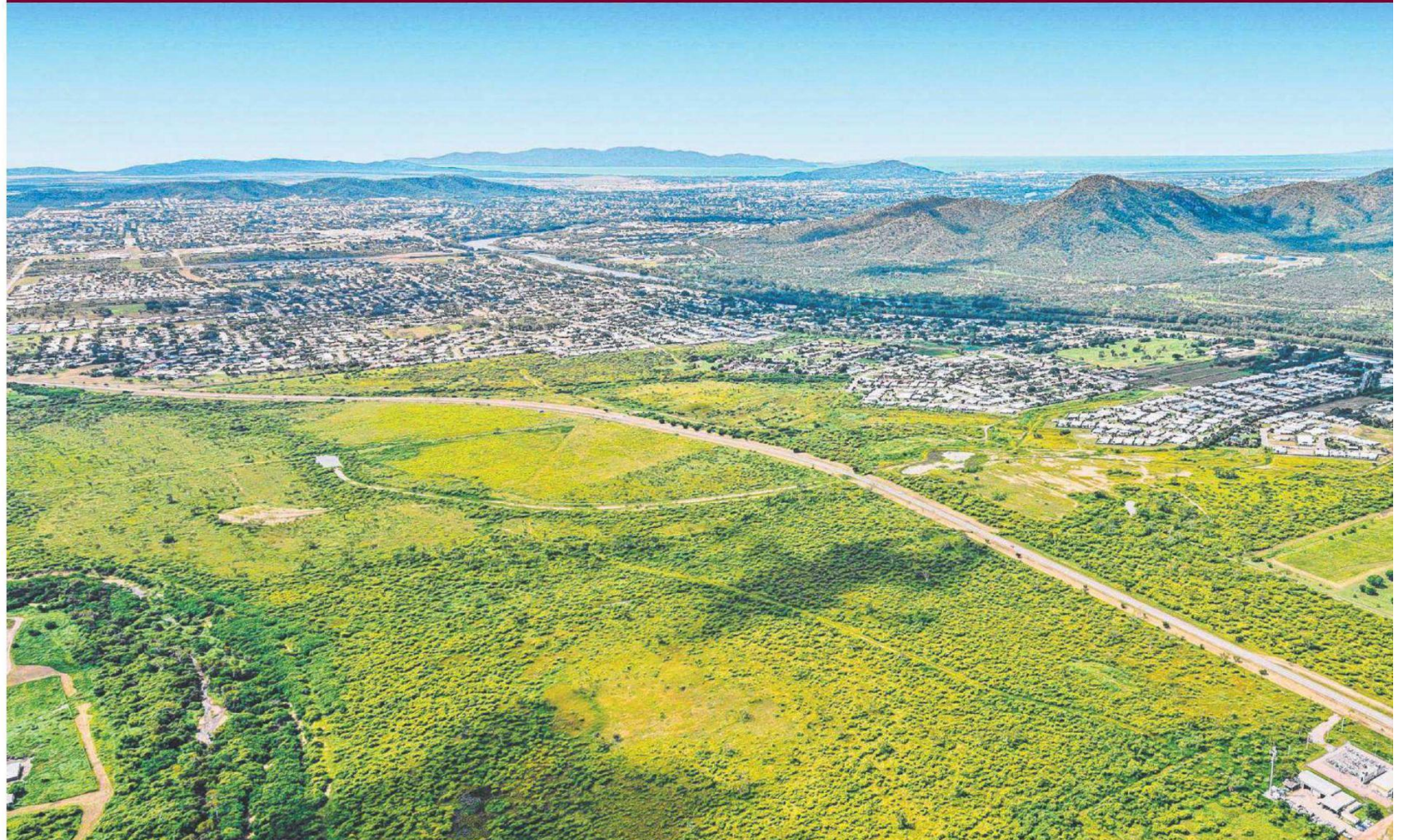
Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney said it presents life-changing opportunities for First Nations communities.

“Digital inclusion means all Australians, including First Nations people, have access and use digital technologies effectively to improve their everyday lives,” she said

“Strengthening digital inclusion for First Nations people, especially if they live in regional or remote Australia, provides significant opportunities for increased connections to community, country and cultural identity.”

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said all Australians deserve access to affordable, reliable connectivity.

850 new homes planned for Townsville



Construction has begun on the Somers and Hervey residential development between South Beck Drive and Riverway Drive in Rasmussen. Picture: Supplied

Rasmussen set to grow

Courtney Snowden

Construction has begun on an 80ha housing development in Rasmussen with the aim of completing 850 homes within the next 15 years.

The Somers and Hervey masterplanned community by Urbex is being built between South Beck Drive and Riverway Drive in Rasmussen, 17km from the Townsville CBD.

The developer bought the 80.27ha site in 2022 and recently opened registration of interest for the residential estate.

Urbex general manager, Peter Sherrie said the project was the company's eighth masterplanned community in the Townsville region and would offer a variety of house sites and 16ha of open spaces, including walking trails, parks, playgrounds and conservation

“Rasmussen is an attractive location for families and individuals alike

Peter Sherrie
Urbex general manager

areas.

“For over 10 years we have been deeply engaged in developing the Townsville region and we are thrilled to begin construction on Somers and Hervey,” he said.

Mr Sherrie said with infrastructure projects underway in the area, including the Ring Road upgrade connecting at Beck Drive and the completed \$18 million Riverway Plaza upgrade, the Upper Ross region



was a strong growth corridor for Townsville.

“Rasmussen is an attractive location for families and individuals alike and, with a strong blend of community amenities and infrastructure, the Somers and Hervey development will

certainly have a positive impact on the growing community,” he said.

Urbex North Queensland project director, David Argent said he was thrilled to officially commence civil construction on the development.

“Over the past year or so we have been working behind the scenes on the master planning and approval phase of the development,” he said.

“It is humbling to see the tremendous support from locals for the project since the announcement.

“The development will undoubtedly bring a fresh dimension of leisurely lifestyle to the suburb, enriching local amenities, incorporating beautifully landscaped open spaces, and providing additional parklands for the community's enjoyment.”

Mr Argent said the development was in a central location close to Riverway Plaza, established schools, childcare facilities and a range of sports and recreational amenities along the Ross River.

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