

MEDIA RELEASE

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RDA Melbourne East and Whitsunday ROC join extensive digital community network

The Australian Smart Communities Association (ASCA) has welcomed two new members focused on advancing their digital economies - Regional Development Australia (RDA) Melbourne East and Whitsunday Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC).

“ASCA’s membership now includes more than 150 local government authorities from capital cities to regional Australia who share our vision for building thriving digital economies by advocating for smart infrastructure, smart capacity and smart innovation,” ASCA President Michael Whereat said.

RDA Melbourne East, representing seven additional local government areas, is now one of eight RDA committees which are part of an extensive network of government, business, industry and communities sharing information and advocating for the resources to assist their transition to a digital economy.

“RDAs in Victoria are also supported by the State Government, which enable them to partner with all three levels of government to provide strategic and targeted responses to economic, environmental and social issues,” Mr Whereat said.

Whitsunday ROC, which includes Isaac, Whitsunday and Mackay Regional councils, represents one of the fastest growing and dynamic economies in Australia, contributing around \$20 billion in Gross Regional Product to Australia’s economy. The three councils have embraced the digital economy and are developing a Digital Economy Strategy and Action Plan with Whitsunday ROC.

“As a representative of a major capital city with a population of just over one million (24.5 percent of Melbourne’s total population), RDA Melbourne East together with Whitsunday ROC (population of 171,000) are both in an optimal position to leverage their partnerships to advance their region’s digital footprint.”

ASCA members are also eligible for member discounts to the Smart Communities Summit in Caloundra, Queensland on 2-4 March 2016. Early bird rates are available until 18 January. Hosted by the [Australian Smart Communities Association](#), the Summit’s theme of **Unlocking the Smart City Code** will explore new challenges for the administration of communities to bring about transformational change to the way they are managed.

Mr Whereat said ASCA was rapidly becoming the peak industry association in Australia for smart communities and digital economic development.

“Smart communities integrate technology and data infrastructure, promote digital technologies to increase the capability of existing infrastructure and services, and champion citizen involvement and citizen-focused service delivery.”

ASCA has identified six priority areas for smart communities to focus on during 2016:

- Smart community leadership
- Digital infrastructure, broadband and connectivity
- Smart systems delivering outcomes in real time
- Digital capacity
- Innovation and entrepreneurialism
- Business models and workforce

Mr Whereat said the adoption of smart technology in city/town management, energy, water, health and transport, along with high-speed broadband, could add more than 70,000 jobs to the Australian economy and bring 1.5 percent growth to Australia’s Gross Domestic Product within five years.

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For media enquiries please contact Michael Whereat on 0439 750 107.