

Response to Backhaul Blackspots Initiative Stakeholder Consultation Paper from  
Central Highlands Development Corporation

This submission relates to item 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 of the Backhaul Blackspots Initiative which cover identification and prioritization of regional centres that would benefit from the initiative.

**General:**

The Central Highlands region of Queensland covers a significant portion of the mineral rich Bowen Basin. The region contributes significantly to the Queensland and Federal economy principally through mining and agriculture. Even in the current economic climate there is significant exploration and development plans for new mines in new areas with life spans extending well into the twenty-first century.

The provision of additional competitive open access fibre would allow access by new communications providers. It would also enable improvements in underserved communities by providing an affordable backhaul alternative facilitating economic development. The number of mines both existing and proposed offers the potential for high bandwidth users, the increasing data needs of local and state government also provide a potential market for a new competitive provider.

Having backhaul available would make the provision of either fixed wireless or 3G mobile services by alternate providers possible in many of these areas. This provides further traffic opportunities and a high level of convenience and safety to the residents.

Attempts by regional councils and development boards to attract alternate broadband providers have traditionally stalled due to the lack of affordable backhaul. The region has been host to an ongoing Clever Networks Broadband Development project which has helped to increase awareness and use of broadband services.

A map is attached to illustrate the routes and the density of mining activity both potential and in progress in the region.

**Proposal One Gladstone to Rolleston:** This is an approximate distance of 300km which would pass through or near the towns of Gladstone, Biloela (pop 5500, power stations, coal mining), Moura (pop 1900, coal mining), Bauhinia Downs (pop 50, proposed mining) and Rolleston (pop 100, regional centre). The agricultural community of Baralaba would fall within the catchment of the proposed fibre path. Many of these communities currently rely on radio backhaul owned and operated by Telstra, this restricts them to one choice of provider for both land based and mobile communications.

To facilitate construction the route would be similar to the proposed coal seam gas pipeline currently under consideration by Santos Pty Ltd. Having an optic fibre available along their pipeline path would allow for telemetry and pipeline management functions. By collaborating and collocating with the construction of the pipeline considerable savings could be made in land access and trenching.

Other proposed mining ventures along the route would be at Wonbinda and Belevedere and Bauhinia Downs. Short spurs would also reach into the large indigenous community of Woorabinda, agricultural areas of the Arcadia Valley and could provide an alternate

Response to Backhaul Blackspots Initiative Stakeholder Consultation Paper from  
Central Highlands Development Corporation

inland circuit through Injune or Springsure. The route to Springsure would follow the proposed pipeline north with the potential for a spur into the Xstrata mine near Rolleston. If continued north to Emerald this route would link with route two described below and provide an alternate path to the coast.

**Proposal Two Emerald to Longreach:** This is a distance of approximately 400 kilometers which would parallel the Capricorn Highway servicing the communities on the route and providing the region serviced by Longreach with an alternate backhaul path. It could be extended to provide a loop into Mt Isa with the potential then of linking to a national loop for allowing a redundant path should a fault occur.

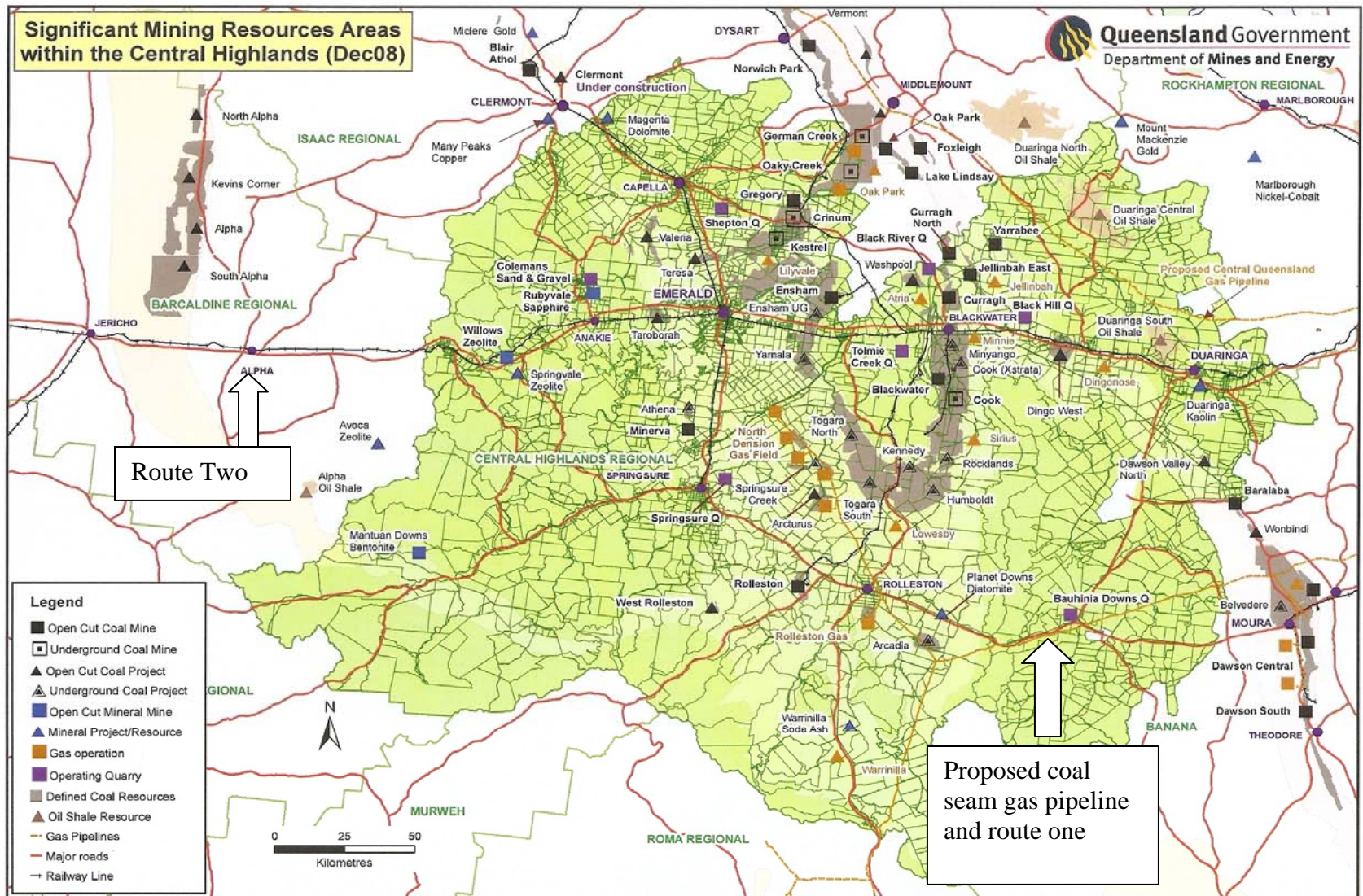
There are several proposed mining developments in the Alpha/ Galilee basin region which would be accessible to the operators of this fibre route. These include the Waratah Coal and Galilee developments as shown on the attached map.

Longreach is a hub community of approximately 5000 people, provides services to communities and agricultural properties over a vast area. The Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) based in Longreach is submitting a proposal on fibre loops from the town which would then match up with this proposed route for backhaul out of the region.

The Gemfields are 45kilometers to the west of Emerald is home to around 1500 people currently very restricted in communication services, there is also council infrastructure that would benefit from additional traffic paths. The towns of Alpha (pop 400), Jericho (pop 300), Barcaldine (pop 1500) and Ilfracombe (pop 370) would benefit from competitive backhaul infrastructure which could used as the back path for broadband. The regional councils in the area would have an alternate choice for their inter office data traffic.

The proposals as described are brief outlines only aimed at demonstrating the potential economic and social benefits of improved access in an economically important region. While there is competitive fibre under Queensland Rail ownership between Emerald and the coast it is not known if any other competitive fibre options exist.

Response to Backhaul Blackspots Initiative Stakeholder Consultation Paper from  
 Central Highlands Development Corporation



Central Highlands Alternate Fibre Backhaul Proposals