

TJUNTJUNTJARA COMMUNITY — DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Statement by Minister for Regional Development

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Regional Development) [9.11 am]: I inform the house of the Cook Labor government's investment in improving internet and phone connectivity in the remote Aboriginal community of Tjuntjuntjara in the goldfields–Esperance region. Tjuntjuntjara is a large Aboriginal community located 650 kilometres north east of Kalgoorlie in the southern part of the Great Victoria Desert. Our government has contributed \$503 789 towards the installation of a wi-fi mesh network to upgrade broadband wi-fi and telephone services to the community provided by Australian Private Networks' activ8me. Tjuntjuntjara community members now have access to more reliable communications and a network that will support and encourage people to stay connected, access information, undertake remote study programs and improve their safety and wellbeing. This investment will also support progress under Closing the Gap outcome 17, which seeks to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion. The initiative leverages private sector investment to bridge the digital divide across WA's vast regions, improving business capacity and competitiveness, social amenity and safety.

Earlier this year we invited telecommunications companies to seek co-investment funding via the state government's \$49 million regional digital connectivity program when applying for the third round of the commonwealth's \$160 million regional connectivity program. It builds on previous rounds that are delivering telecommunications projects, such as wi-fi to the Kalumburu, Mowanjum and Jigalong communities, broadband solutions across the south west and better mobile services in the central wheatbelt and Kimberley. This is a great example of commonwealth–state collaboration to overcome the tyranny of distance by working with telecommunications providers to deliver fast, reliable and affordable digital and mobile services to regional businesses and residents. These services are fundamental to modern life no matter where people live and enable businesses and communities to connect to a range of opportunities, efficiencies and digital applications. I am proud to be part of a government that continues to invest in regional communities to make them more sustainable and livable.