



NT extremes are no barrier for Konect's robust performance

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Awe-inspiring and unforgiving, but Northern Territories’ extremes are no barrier for Konect’s robust performance.

Try to imagine the infrastructure requirements of big cities like Sydney, Melbourne, or Brisbane: Roads, footpaths, street lighting, sewage, public spaces; the list is endless.

Now try to imagine those same requirements serving a population of only 246,000, spread over an area of 1.4M km². An area with 22,000km of roads, of which only 30% are sealed. With enormous challenges in communications, logistics and transportation. With severe climatic changes, ranging from ground baking heat to tumultuous floods.

This is the Northern Territory, and its government’s day to day ‘normal’ is facing down challenges like few others in Australia.

Shane Tepper, Project Director, Civil Asset Management for the Dept of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is at the forefront of the complex set of resources, processes and projects necessary to ensure that no challenge is insurmountable in this land of environmental diversity.

He explained, “Seasonal weather, extremes of climate and vast areas prone to flooding and closure meant that gathering data on road infrastructure was always going to be a challenge. We had relied on internal resources and field officers, spending much of their time supervising work in the field, relying on paper-based record keeping. While these people had exceptional local knowledge, the transference of this knowledge was often unpredictable and, without proper records, high costs and poor productivity were proving untenable”.

POPULATION

246,000

KILOMETRES OF ROAD

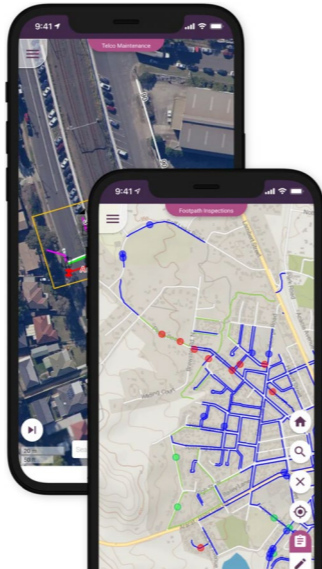
22,000

TRANSITION RATE

100%

KONECT COVERAGE

1.4M km²



“

With better access to data, we now have far greater accountability in all areas.

– Shane Tepper, Project Director, Civil Asset Management, NT Government

15 years ago, a major overview of these particular challenges took place. Shane continued, “We developed a set of maintenance intervention rules, reporting and response times; setting up inspection teams with in-house resources. But we needed a system that would drive this. We started with GBM Mobile, which proved excellent at recording defects, but we soon realised that we needed more functionality”.

Along came Konect. “Serious practical and insightful consideration was given as to why a tool like Konect was needed, and what previously difficult or insurmountable challenges could now be resolved. Konect immediately gave us a lot more functionality. We were able to build our maintenance business rules directly into the system itself, and it gave us the ability to capture GPS reference points, and provide photographic evidence of both defects and repairs.”

David Kerslake, Shane’s predecessor, and now a consultant for the NT government, remains actively involved in Konect’s success in managing assets. He has seen firsthand, the transition from laptop-based data collection apps to where we are today. He explained, “The old systems were extremely specialist, and you couldn’t readily give them to contractors to use. That’s all changed with Konect, and one of its many benefits is that it can be used on a mobile or any device that people might be familiar with”.

As with many large organisations, the effectiveness of infrastructure operations is dependent on timely, accountable, and cost-effective arrangements with external contractors. Shane said “Since we introduced Konect, and handed out road inspections to our contractors, their feedback has been that it’s extremely easy to use, allowing a more surgical process when it comes to managing defect and repair maintenance”.

Shane continued “We have a clear set of intervention rules, and once a defect is detected, it is recorded and assessed by maintenance project officers, who can run individual reports on defects of a certain type, conduct a risk assessment and allocate a repair job specific to a certain maintenance contract”.



Before Konect, ensuring that outcomes were satisfying expectations involved long drives to verify, and the associated costs in time and productivity were marked. “Now we can do this work in the office, by seeing direct evidence that repairs have been completed, using time and location stamps, photos and other detailed information. We can also batch up the required repairs, so that we are sending crews to a multitude of jobs over a shorter time period to be more efficient”.

David was quick to place a high emphasis on the value of Konect’s use of photos. “Perhaps the biggest advantage for us is that it can place photos against a record. Human resources, such as inspectors on the ground to manage works, have been diminished, and having photographic evidence allows us to meet our duty of care and effectively report on inspections. Plus, since the Northern Territory adopted self-government in 1978, it has relied wholly on contracted labour. So to have a system that holds contractors to account, with recorded data and photos is invaluable”.

For all organisations, strict compliance to regulations, KPIs and budgets is essential. Shane said, “With better access to data, we now have far greater accountability in all areas. We are spending public money, and are serious about our duty of care. Now that we have Konect, our record keeping and processes are ensuring that our contractors are doing exactly what they are paid for.”

It is clear that Konect is making a big difference in the way the NT government are going about their business, but Shane explains that this is just the tip of the iceberg. “We see opportunities for Konect right across our infrastructure operations. It’s very configurable, but what started out as road repairs has been adapted for weed management and treatments, street sweeping, road grading, rest area usage and much more. We are also working with Konect on our emergency management response, which will include the clearance of roads following a cyclone; offering, for example, real time information on when roads are available for use by the emergency services.”

Another project that Konect is actively involved in is the Towards Zero project, a nationwide road safety campaign. David explained, “Were using Konect to log projects that might be eligible, and meet the criteria for funding to improve road safety”.

A common observation among Konect users is, ‘just how did we do this before?’. Service levels are now easily and effectively measured, response times and costings are slashed, and compliance is assured. All areas where previously, information was limited, unreliable or non-existent. Plus, as Shane stated, “We can now better demonstrate what level of funding is required for each year’s budget.”

While Konect is seen as a success story in the Northern Territory, it really is only just getting started. It’s a place of awe-inspiring beauty, but it can also be harsh and unforgiving. Having a tool that can adapt, is just what the doctor ordered.

Shane concluded, “The greatest benefit of Konect is how easily configurable it is. It offers so many possibilities, but it is also intuitive and can be set up in no time at all, with very minimal training. In fact, if you can use a smart phone, you can use Konect. It’s very easy”.

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