

## First of Its Kind Conference a Smart Success

Imagine a city where smart technology and the Internet of Things is making people healthier, life safer, traffic move more efficiently, parking easier, air cleaner, utilities cheaper and a whole lot more.

There is no need to imagine - all this is coming true as the Sunshine Coast builds what is being touted by global technology giants as Australia's smartest city. The SunCentral Maroochydore project is the only greenfield CBD development in an existing urban area in Australia, and smart technology is being embedded throughout the new city centre.

So it was fitting that in the same year as SunCentral Maroochydore announced the commencement of construction that the Sunshine Coast also played host to the inaugural **Australian Smart Communities Summit**.

### A Pivotal Event

The first conference of its type in Australia, the Summit provided a vital opportunity for some of Australia's sharpest minds to learn from national and international leaders at the very forefront of what it takes to become a smart city or smart community. Collectively, they revealed the amazing technologies that will be part and parcel of our cities and communities in the near future.

Keynote speaker Mrinalini Ingram, who headed up Cisco Systems Smart+Connected Cities global program, said there are currently around 25 billion devices connected to the internet, and this will grow to 50 billion by 2020. She said that this provided an incredible opportunity for forward-thinking communities to become shining examples of how mass connectivity can make people's lives happier, healthier and wealthier.

### The Framework

The Summit, held at The Events Centre in Caloundra, started with a Welcome Reception and was followed by an official opening the next morning by the Queensland Deputy Premier, Jackie Trad.

More than 150 delegates from around Australia were joined by a small international contingent to learn from four international speakers, one Australian adviser to the United Nations, a former State Premier, and a current Australian Telstra Business Woman of the Year.

Other facets of the Summit were:

- A conference dinner at The Powerboat Club, a waterside venue on the pristine Pumicestone Passage.
- Boosted WiFi connectivity sponsored by Telstra.
- 14 exhibitors showcased smart systems and products.
- Two field visits, which saw one group inspect the University of the Sunshine Coast's world-class 3D visualisation facilities while the other group went on a walking tour of Caloundra's smart street and infrastructure amenities.
- Five "discussion tables" in the trade area were hosted by experts to encourage out-of-session networking.
- A custom app included live questioning capability in plenary sessions.
- Former World Champion Barista, Tim Adams, set up a special coffee cart in the trade area.





## First of Its Kind Conference a Smart Success

### Local Support

The Sunshine Coast business community banded together to ensure that this inaugural conference was highly successful, and numerous local businesses participated as delegates, sponsors or exhibitors. Other support included:

- Sponsorship-in-kind by a local PCO.
- The Events Centre provided special rates.
- Business Events Sunshine Coast (BESC) joined with Sunshine Coast Council to sponsor the Welcome Reception.
- BESC provided delegate satchels and copies of the Official Visitor and Event Guide.
- Rumba Resort, Oaks Oasis Resort and Monaco Apartments extended special room rates and offers that saw many interstate delegates bring their families with them to enjoy the beaches, trendy bars and chic eateries.

### Challenges Were No Barrier

Through the planning process, the Summit evolved from a simple one-day plenary program with welcome drinks to a multi-day, three-stream program with two tour options, two social events and four international speakers.

The challenge: the venue was not available for more days than initially contracted, making installation and exhibition build times extremely tight. "To make things even more interesting, many exhibitors had custom booths and, as smart community providers, complex tech requirements. So the exhibition booths had to be built carefully and thoughtfully," ASCA President, Michael Whereat, said.

"Thanks to collaboration and co-operation, a flexible venue, plus a few extra expert hands to help, we did it!" he said.



### What a Success!

- Attendee numbers matched the organiser's highest projections.
- The Summit has now become the "must attend" conference for smart community professionals throughout Australia.
- Delegates came from across Australia, New Zealand, Asia, USA and Europe, with confirmation that the destination was a huge drawcard.
- Evaluation indicated that the success of this inaugural conference should see numbers almost double in 2017.