

Aussie mapping technology set to take on Google

by Stuart Corner, iTWire ‘

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Perth based ipernica (ASX: IPR) is poised to launch a new media company based around high resolution digitised terrain maps, that it says will compete with Google Maps and with Microsoft Bing.

The service will be delivered by ipernica subsidiary NearMap using aerial mapping technology developed by NearMap, [a company acquired by ipernica in 2008](#) .

NearMap's imagery is generated from aircraft mounted cameras. It provides both a top down view and oblique views from all four cardinal compass points and a digital terrain map (heights of individual points).

A key advantage is claimed to be currency and frequency of updates - NearMap has been flying Australia's five largest cities monthly and says this regular updating will enable users to see changes over time, such as the construction of new roads, and erosion of coastal zones.

Significantly it claims to be able to carry out its surveys and to process and serve the results at much less cost and much quicker than competing alternatives. It says that to fly and map the whole of Australia would cost about \$100m compared to \$1 billion with traditional aerial mapping technologies.

ipernica managing director, Graham Griffiths, told iTWire: "As a new media company we see a large blue sky opportunity to build a web presence. In that space, Google is a major player and so is Microsoft with Bing, so they would be our major competitors. We don't intend to compete with specialist aerial survey companies that do smaller areas."

According to Griffiths the key to NearMap is its proprietary aerial photographing and image processing technology. Its image capture equipment fits in a pod that attaches to popular single engined Cessna 210 aircraft. This equipment takes vertical and oblique views from north, south east and west. This data (generated at the rate of 1Gbyte per second) is then processed on NearMap's super computers and served via its web portal.

According to Griffiths, "Because we use standard Cessna 210 aircraft, we can go to any airport, hire the plane and the pilot for a couple of days [to carry out a complete survey of a major city] and we are done."

He added: "We have automated the processing so that within the week we can be publishing the result. We are also delivering a digital elevation model as another automated output from the system...We would not contemplate flying the whole of Australia monthly - annually would probably be sufficient."

The NearMap portal (<http://nearmap.com>) is due to go live before year end with monthly

coverage of Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane that has been built up over the past year (It was live but not working correctly earlier this week, but that seems to have been an oversight - within hours of iTWire speaking to Griffiths) the site had been password protected).

Griffiths said: "We will formally launch the portal this quarter. There are multiple revenue streams but the main one is licensing the service to local, state and Federal Governments, It will be free to consumers."

Griffiths conjures up a vision of the information and service that NearMap will provide as a kind of "national digital terrain information infrastructure...like roads, railways, or even the NBN," that can bring very considerable economic benefits.

"What we are really talking about is a national digital infrastructure layer that has many downstream applications that industry could develop and we would get the benefits over several years," he said. "It would be a step forward for this country if the Federal Government was to contemplate a national digital infrastructure layer like this."

According to Griffiths, "An independent Allen Consulting Group study estimates the use of NearMap datasets will increase Australia's GDP by \$6.8 billion and create an additional 4,200 jobs by 2015." He told iTWire "They did that independently using the Monash Model. They looked at the various segments of the market: infrastructure, urban planning ,climate change, etc."

However Australia's five cities are only the first stage of Ipernica's ambitions for NearMap. Griffiths said: "Our vision is to do this globally: to fly 700 cities. How we do that, only time will tell. Australia is very much the test country. We are deploying this quarter and then the world will be able to see what we are doing."