



**MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
SENATOR THE HON ROBERT HILL**

**MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND CUSTOMS
SENATOR THE HON CHRIS ELLISON**

NEWS RELEASE

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TORRES STRAIT OVER HORIZON RADAR TO BOOST BORDER SECURITY

The Australian Government today launched a trial of new state-of-the-art over-the-horizon radar in the Torres Strait to boost protection of our northern borders from drugs, disease, illegal immigration and fishing.

Defence Minister Robert Hill and Justice and Customs Minister Chris Ellison today said the new over-the-horizon High Frequency Surface Wave Radar (HFSWR) will allow Defence and Customs Coastwatch to better monitor Australia's northern coastline, and in particular the highly strategic region of the Torres Strait.

Senator Ellison was in the Torres Strait for the handover by contractor, Daronmont Technologies.

The HFSWR can detect surface vessels and low-flying aircraft beyond the visible horizon, unlike conventional radars that are limited to line-of-sight operations.

This technology has the potential to deliver 24-hour wide-area coastal surveillance of aircraft, ships and boats travelling in the Torres Strait.

During the trial, that will be conducted for between two and three years, we will be testing and evaluating the future surveillance potential of the radar, using it to complement our other surveillance assets and systems.

The successful completion of the construction phase of the \$23 million project and initial acceptance testing was a tribute to the hard work of Customs, Defence and Daronmont personnel.

This project demonstrates yet again the close working relationship between Customs and Defence as both organisations work together to protect our borders.

It also has the potential to provide early storm warnings and to protect offshore oil and gas installations, if further developed and deployed.

Today's handover ceremony, attended by Torres Strait community representatives and executives from Daronmont Technologies, also highlighted the success of the Howard Government's Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) provisions introduced into the Native Title Act in 1998.

Senator Hill and Senator Ellison signed ILUAs with the Dauan and Badu Island communities in February 2004, which allowed for the construction of both the transmit and receive facilities on the two Torres Strait Islands.

The detailed aspects of those ILUAs are now near to finalisation, reflecting close ongoing liaison between traditional owners and the Commonwealth.

A 440-metre long receiver array is located on Dauan Island, in the northern Torres Strait. The transmitter is on the uninhabited Koey Ngurtai ("Pumpkin") island, to the north of Badu Island, in the middle of Torres Strait.

Under the voluntary agreements, local communities have been provided with employment opportunities during the preparation of the sites and during the construction phase.

In addition, several residents will be acting as caretakers of these remote sites on an ongoing basis.

The contract for the provision, operation and up to three-years of support of the radar was signed between Defence and Daronmont Technologies in February 2003.

The project is jointly funded by Customs and Defence and is managed by the Defence Materiel Organisation.

The HFSWR technology was developed by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and is another successful example of advanced capability developed under Defence's Capability and Technology Demonstrator Program.

Daronmont Technologies is a wholly Australian owned small/medium enterprise that specialises in design, engineering, integration and support of complex high technology electronics and software-intensive systems, with facilities in Technology Park in South Australia, Williamstown in New South Wales and Burwood in Victoria. The company refers to the radar system sold to the Commonwealth by the name SECAR – Surface wave Extended Coastal Area Radar.

High Resolution photographs of the HFSWR Transmit and Receive sites are available from the Customs media room at www.customs.gov.au

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