

PERTH INVENTION EXTENDS NEXT G COVERAGE

The multi-award winning Balconi Tracker, which is revolutionising communications in the offshore oil and gas industry, has now extended the coverage of the Telstra Next G Network even further out to sea.

The latest trials have shown that the Tracker is enabling reliable and economical communications up to 200 kilometres offshore.

“The potential of this product is overwhelming and far above anything we anticipated,” said the product’s inventor and managing director of Balconi Telecommunications, Con Michael.

“The Tracker’s ability to reach such a vast distance will see most of the frustrating communication problems faced by remote workers disappearing ...in most areas, black spots will become a thing of the past.”

The Balconi Tracker is a mobile, ship-stabilised ‘antenna tracking system’ which can be fixed to vessels, rigs, cars and buildings.

Mr. Michael said the Tracker can save companies hundreds of thousands of dollars by providing a viable alternative to the existing satellite communication system.

“It’s not only 90 per cent cheaper but 100 times faster, meaning isolated offshore workers can now use the phone, fax and email or surf the net at much cheaper mobile phone prices,” Mr. Michael said.

Although the secure and efficient Balconi Tracker was developed primarily for the offshore oil and gas industry, Mr. Michael said it has many applications and its rapidly growing list of clientele ranges from tourist and oil and gas vessels working off Western Australia’s north-west coast to the NSW Water Police and private boat owners.

The Federal and State Governments have also recognised the potential of the device and are set to purchase the Balconi Trackers to improve the communications and safety of its Health Department and Emergency Service workers in remote locations.

Mr. Michael said a contract for the supply of 50 of the Trackers is scheduled to be signed later this month by WA Communications Minister Fran Logan and Federal Communications Minister, Stephen Conroy.

Mr. Michael said that besides the huge cost savings, the introduction of affordable broadband connectivity has other enormous benefits for both the employer and employee.

“The isolation and detachment experienced by offshore workers, who are separated from their families for weeks at a time, is reduced, helping the companies to retain a more stable workforce which is one of the biggest challenges facing the industry today,” he said.

Mr. Michael believes that in an increasingly technology-dependent world, affordable broadband connectivity should be available to everyone.

The Tracker has been recognised for its ingenuity and benefit to the community and economy, recently receiving the following prestigious engineering and innovation awards:

- The 2007 Engineers Australia – Australia Engineering Excellence – Finalist
- The 2007 Engineers Australia - WA Engineering Excellence – Winner
- The 2007 ATUG National Award for the Effective Use of Broadband.
- The 2007 ATUG Chairman’s Award for Innovation.
- The 2007 ATUG Award for Innovation in Communications.
- The 2007 WAITTA Award for Innovation.

An international patent on the Balconi Tracker is pending.