

Million-dollar Boost for Positioning Technology in Australia



The Australian government will invest AUD12 million in a two-year programme looking into the future of positioning technology in Australia. From using Google Maps on their smartphone to emergency management and farming, most Australians use and benefit from positioning technology every day without realising it.

The funding will be used to test instant, accurate and reliable positioning technology that could provide future safety, productivity, efficiency and environmental benefits across many industries in Australia, including transport, agriculture, construction, and resources.

GNSS accuracy

Research has shown that the widespread adoption of improved positioning technology has the potential to generate upwards of AUD73 billion worth of value to Australia by 2030. Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Darren Chester said the programme could test the potential of Satellite Based Augmentation Systems technology (SBAS) in the four transport sectors: aviation, maritime, rail and road.

SBAS utilises space-based and ground-based infrastructure to improve and augment the accuracy, integrity and availability of basic GNSS signals, such as those currently provided by GPS. The future use of SBAS technology was strongly supported by the aviation industry to assist in high accuracy GPS-dependent aircraft navigation, Minister Chester added.

Positioning data can also be used in a range of other transport applications including maritime navigation, automated train management systems and in the future, driverless and connected cars, he concluded.

Potential of the North

Minister for Resources and Northern Australia Matt Canavan said access to more accurate data about the Australian landscape would also help unlock the potential of the North. This technology has potential uses in a range of sectors, including agriculture and mining, which have always played an important role in the economy, and will also be at the heart of future growth in Northern Australia, Canavan said. Access to this type of technology can help industry and Government make informed decisions about future investments, he added.

The two-year project will test SBAS technology that has the potential to improve positioning accuracy in Australia to less than five centimetres. Currently, positioning in Australia is usually accurate to five to 10 metres.

The SBAS test-bed is Australia's first step towards joining countries such as the US, Russia, India, Japan and many across Europe in investing in SBAS technology and capitalising on the link between precise positioning, productivity and innovation.

Early this year, Geoscience Australia with the Collaborative Research Centre for Spatial Information (CRCSI) will call for organisations from a number of industries including agriculture, aviation, construction, mining, maritime, rail, road, spatial, and utilities to participate in the test-bed.