Australian Government
Geoscience Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

Australia widens scope for satellite monitoring

For immediate release: 12 February 2008

From February this year, Australia will have access to a new source of Earth observing satellite information from India's remote sensing satellite, Resourcesat-1.

The Minister for Resources and Energy, the Hon Martin Ferguson, MP, said that Resourcesat-1 will be used by Commonwealth and State governments for exploration, topographic mapping, monitoring of crops and forests, and to map floods and fires in emergency situations.

"Remote sensing information is a vital resource for monitoring changes in the land, the coastal zone, and at times for emergency response. Australia relies heavily on this type of satellite information, particularly from the US Landsat satellites. Having access to more sources means more effective and reliable monitoring for government and industry sectors," said the Minister.

"This is an important step for Australia. The US Landsat satellites are not in the best of health, and this new source will ensure we can continue to do our business in the unfortunate event that they fail. Resourcesat-1 will provide satellite images that are similar to Landsat, but with the advantage of more frequent coverage."

"Access to Resourcesat-1 is part of Geoscience Australia's Landsat data contingency plan. It means that Australia can continue its Earth observation programs even if the US Landsat satellites fail. Australian governments use thousands of images from Landsat 5 and Landsat 7 each year, but with these systems starting to fail, we want to make sure there is no gap. Due to a technical fault that occurred in 2003, the quality of images from Landsat 7 has been affected. Landsat 5 is now 24 years old, quite remarkable considering it was only designed to last two to three years. In October 2007, it suffered a battery problem, from which it is yet to fully recover," the Minister said.

Geoscience Australia will use its ground-stations at Alice Springs and Hobart to receive moderate resolution data from two of the instruments (cameras) on board the Indian satellite: the Linear Imaging Self Scanner (LISS-3); and the Advanced Wide Field Sensor (AWiFS). LISS-3 has a resolution of 24 metres with a 140 km swath and a 24 day revisit cycle. AWiFS resolution is 50 to 70 metres with a 740km swath, enabling repeat images on a weekly basis.

"This development sees further diversification of the sources of imagery being received by Geoscience Australia, which is also one of only four world-wide Data Nodes for the Japan Advanced Land Observing Satellite (ALOS)," said the Minister.

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:
Geoscience Australia 24 hour Media Hotline 1800 882 035