



## COASTWATCH TRIALS NEW 'EYE IN THE SKY' TECHNOLOGY

Advanced surveillance technology trialled by Customs Coastwatch off the Western Australia coastline could one day change the way Australia monitors its maritime borders.

The technology is a small pilotless aircraft equipped with surveillance sensors which can remain aloft for more than 20 hours.

Known as an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), this aircraft was tested over 100 hours of day and night flying in waters off Shark Bay, near Carnarvon.

With a wingspan of just three metres and weighing only 15kg, the aircraft is launched from the back of a vehicle and remotely piloted.



"Australia is always looking at new technologies to more efficiently keep an eye on our vast coastline and I understand that initial results from the trial are encouraging," the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison, said.

"UAVs are being examined by many countries, including Australia, because of their potential to offer a cost-effective, flexible surveillance system that can complement the use of other assets such as aircraft and surface vessels.

"While it is too early to speculate on whether UAVs will form part of our surveillance program in the future, the trial is providing Coastwatch with valuable information about both the limitations and capabilities of this evolving technology."

Coastwatch is reviewing its civil maritime surveillance and response program to determine how best to respond to future challenges in civil maritime surveillance.

"The results of this UAV trial will be examined as part of this review," Senator Ellison said.