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Australian Commitment to Giant Magellan Telescope and space research “welcome”

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Canberra-based Electro Optic Systems, a provider of telescope and space technology worldwide, has welcomed the Australian Government’s announced funding of \$128.4 million for new Australian space research and to help fund and become a partner in the establishment of the Giant Magellan Telescope in Chile [GMT].

The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Kim Carr announced* \$40 million in new funding for space research and \$88.4 million to fund Australia’s role as a major partner alongside institutions from the US and South Korea in the \$1 billion Giant Magellan telescope.

EOS CEO, Dr Ben Greene said the company was currently in talks with a number of potential Australian partners to maximise its potential involvement in both programs.

“The commitment by the government is important as the funds enable programs that will consolidate excellence in Australian space research and at the same time strengthen a space industry in Australia that has proven its resilience and sustainability.

Dr Greene said: “EOS is a major provider of telescope technology in the world market, and is Australia’s only large telescope technology company. Over the past decade, using our international telescope development contracts, we have established a network of Australian sub-contractors capable of contributing to the GMT Program.

“EOS has been working for some time to develop cutting edge technologies in large optical support systems, adaptive optics and laser-enhanced telescope performance. We have previously provided this technology under competitive international procurements to large astronomy programs around the world and there is a possibility the GMT will need some of these new developments.”

Dr Greene said that, noting the government’s stated requirement to “maximise Australian involvement in the design, construction, instrumentation and maintenance of the GMT – as well as in the science” EOS, in partnership with notable Australian research institutions, would make a determined effort to be involved.”

The GMT, to be located on high desert plateau in Chile to optimise its performance, will be larger and more powerful than any other optical telescope when it becomes operational from 2018. It will provide images 10 times sharper than the Hubble Space Telescope which has already changed our understanding of the universe.

The \$88.4 million funds provided include \$23.4 million to upgrade Australian infrastructure, including the Australian National University [ANU] Mount Stromlo Observatory; and \$65 million for the telescope itself.

"We've also noted the commitment to upgrade ANU facilities at Mount Stromlo for GMT applications, and EOS is also making plans to upgrade its Mount Stromlo Space Research Centre for participation in this project.

"Additionally, independently of any Australian participation in the GMT program, US subsidiaries of EOS in Arizona which also specialise in some telescope technologies essential for the GMT Project will also seek to contribute to GMT development in partnership with US-based institutions," Dr Greene added

*** The \$40m announcement was made on 12 May 2009; the \$88.4m announcement on 20 July 2009.**

Further information:

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