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- THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP  
Minister for Small Business,  
Independent Contractors and  
the Service Economy

## Media Release

Senator the Hon Kim Carr

27 Aug 2009

**\$80M PERTH SUPER COMPUTING CENTRE TO BOOST SKA BID**

A new \$80 million high-performance computing project launched in Perth today is a significant step forward for the joint Australia-New Zealand bid to host the \$2.5 billion Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio-telescope.

"This collaborative centre will have a radio-astronomy focus and be closely linked with the leading-edge Australian SKA Pathfinder radio-telescope being built in WA as a precursor to the SKA project," Senator Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, said.

"It will build relationships with institutions like the new International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research to assist with providing the data-crunching power needed to interpret information from the Pathfinder and eventually – we hope – contribute to the SKA itself.

"The centre will go a long way towards demonstrating that Australia is ready to host the SKA. It will also boost WA's and Australia's wider research credentials by supporting work in other data-intensive disciplines, including mineralogy and chemistry.

"Nineteen nations have come together to create the SKA, a large-scale, new-generation radio telescope that will have a discovery potential 10,000 times greater than current instruments. It is one of the world's most significant mega-science projects.

"Australia and New Zealand have a vision of an SKA using up to four thousand antennas spread over five thousand kilometres to create a single deep space listening device that will be by far the most powerful of its type in the world, with the capacity to see back to the formation of the first stars.

"The sparsely populated mid-west region of WA is one of two sites being considered to host the core of the SKA, the other is in Southern Africa. A decision is expected in 2012.

"Hosting the SKA will bring enormous economic and scientific benefits, particularly to WA, including spin-offs in areas such as supercomputing, data transmission, renewable energy, construction and manufacturing.

"As evidenced by this project, the Rudd Government will continue to do all it can to promote WA as the world's best core site to host one of the world's greatest science projects."

The centre will be built next to the Australian Resources Research Centre in Perth on land owned by CSIRO using funds from the \$160.5 million space and astronomy component of the Government's Super Science Initiative, which was announced in the 2009-10 Budget.

It will be operated by iVEC, an organisation dedicated to building supercomputing capacity in WA. iVEC is a joint venture between CSIRO and WA's four public universities, with support from the State Government.

"The new high-performance centre will be named after Dr Joseph Lade Pawsey (1908-1962), the father of radio-astronomy in Australia and one of the great pioneers in this field internationally," Senator Carr said.

"Australia's outstanding reputation in radio-astronomy today is due in no small part to the techniques Dr Pawsey helped develop – techniques that are now applied in observatories worldwide.

"Dr Pawsey did important work in optical astronomy, ionospheric research, and radio-physics, as well as co-authoring the first comprehensive text on radio-astronomy and helping to found the new discipline of interferometry.

"Dr Pawsey enthusiastically advocated international scientific cooperation, so it's highly appropriate that a centre with strong links to one of the biggest international scientific collaborations of all time should be named after him," Senator Carr said.

For more information on the SKA, including pictures and animations, visit [www.ska.gov.au](http://www.ska.gov.au) or [www.skatelescope.org](http://www.skatelescope.org)

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