

# BATTLESPACE NEWS



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## **NEW PORTABLE FIELD COMMUNICATIONS DEVICE FIELDIED BY AUSTRALIAN ARMY**

A new portable field communications device - 'P1' and 'P3' using copper cable in place of fibre optic could become a standard within the Australian army. Used primarily to extend Command and Control from fibre-optic tactical LANs, these systems were first tested during the Australian army exercises Phoenix and Crocodile West, using a number of functioning prototypes. The tests proved the system's capacity to replace fibre-optic based LANs while still providing features such as integrated voice telephony and video (conferences). DCI's products have been developed in close collaboration with actual users over the last three years. The result is that these products reflect closely Australian Defence Force field communications requirements. The products, P1 and P3 (single and multiple channel systems) were deployed in a number of operations by various Signal Squadrons including operations in East Timor, Bougainville and the recent 'Tandem Thrust' joint exercises. Developed by a Melbourne company, Defence Communications Industry, with input from the Australian army, these products provide seamless LAN connections over 'DON10' in any terrain, over distances of 5kms and often beyond. Copper is a cheap and sturdy communications medium, familiar to soldiers.

As Major Ian Thomas, of the SDSS Project (Army Logistics) noted, "fibre optic cable; kevlar-armoured especially for defence applications, is an expensive medium and breaks when caught up in the track link of tanks or severed by forklifts. These accidents; actual events during exercise Phoenix, normally occur during the night under blackout conditions. Although the fibre can be repaired, such repair requires returning to base and expensive facilities". During the 'Tandem Thrust' exercise, fibre cables were being eaten by cows and bandicoots - effectively making expensive comms infrastructures useless. DON10 on the other hand is not only cheaper and easier to install, retrieve and fix, it is impregnated with anti-vermin chemicals, making it unappetising to the 4-legged animal subversives!

The new product version was released in October 2001 and is expected to be deployed by various Army units countrywide. It is also being evaluated for use by the SDSS and BCSS Projects as well as other armed forces in UK, Thailand and USA.