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By Peter Roberts



Lencom Antennas had its origin back in the days of long HF radio antennas that used to sprout from the bonnets of four wheel drive vehicles and that kept Australia's legions of grey nomads in touch on their lap of the continent.

Fast forward from its founding by Brad Cowain and Peter Leonie in 1984, and the company's specialisation in HF antennas and systems has taken it to the cutting edge of critical humanitarian and defence sector communications needs.

HF communications is no longer critical for four wheel driving, but is increasingly used in secure defence communications.

Today Lencom's tactical and mobile antennas, Automatic Antenna Tuning Units (ATUs) and base stations are in use in over 150 countries and the company manufactures long range communications antennas and radar antennas for the military, law enforcement and emergency services. It also makes bespoke Satellite, VHF and UHF antennas.

Cowain told @AuManufacturing: "There are a lot of military scenarios and energy services scenarios where mobile communications or satellite communications aren't available.

"HF communications it turns out are incredibly reliable and incredibly hard to block from a military view."

Lencom built on its HF capabilities and branched out such that its products are considered the standard in some sectors.

Cowain said that the founders success was due as much to what they learned when their ideas did not work out, as they did to when they worked.

Cowain said: "A lot of our antennas in the first 20 years were destined for light commercial vehicles.

"Today we also make antennas as big as a house, including some that are 80 metres long, 50 metres high and weigh three tonnes.

"We cover the range."

Lencom's involvement with defence contractor BAE Systems Australia began as a third party supplier to its contractors, later evolving to supplying masts for Australia's Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN) which utilises over the horizon radar antenna arrays to monitor the sea approaches to our north.

The company is now supporting BAE Systems' Phase 6 upgrade of JORN, and three other radar projects. Meanwhile a planned Phase 7 upgrade involves major antenna works at JORN's remote locations.

Cowain said: "We are dealing with a number of large defence prime contractors in different capacities.

"We have always found BAE particularly good to deal with.

"But this business is not for the feint hearted for a small company keeping up with corporate requests."

Lencom has a highly focused R&D effort which sees it introduce new products almost every year, helping it stay ahead of the game.

"Last year we had our first order from a US prime contractor – we would not have done that without the involvement of BAE."

Picture: Lencom Antennas

*@AuManufacturing's series Defence industry partnering for success is sponsored by defence sector prime contractor BAE Systems Australia.*

The logo for BAE Systems, featuring the words "BAE SYSTEMS" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font on a red rectangular background.