



## REMOTE COASTAL SURVEILLANCE STRENGTHENED

Surveillance of high-threat approaches off the north-west coastline of Australia will be greatly enhanced after the extension and sealing of the Mungalalu Truscott Airbase runway, on the Western Australian coast.

The Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison, visited the airbase to announce that the runway extensions would enable Customs Dash-8 maritime surveillance aircraft to use the airfield, dramatically increasing the time available for surveillance on each mission.

The airbase, midway between Broome and Darwin, now operates as a base for the smaller Customs Coastwatch aircraft, including the Reims and Islander surveillance planes.

The extensions will allow Dash-8 aircraft to increase the time on surveillance by up to two hours each flight. This equates to an additional two million square nautical miles a year.

Dash-8 aircraft are equipped with electronic sensors, radar and a satellite communication system which allows live transmission of still and video imagery from the aircraft.

The heritage-listed Mungalalu Truscott Airbase played a role in the defence of northern Australia in WWII, and still serves as a base for our border protection forces.

Coastwatch aircraft patrol an offshore maritime area of around 3.6 million square nautical miles each year, detecting activities such as people smuggling, illegal fishing, marine pollution and drug trafficking.

There has been a strong tradition of cooperation between the communities in the Kimberley and the Australian Government in protecting our borders. Local people helped build the original airstrip in 1944 and last year the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation (WGAC) signed a lease with Triple A Air Services to operate the Mungalalu Truscott Airbase.

Advance payment of \$250,000 for landing fees by Coastwatch has enabled Triple A Air Services to extend the runway and will allow Dash-8 aircraft to use the airbase for three years.

This extension is a great example of community, industry and Customs working together to boost border protection.