

ACT businessman a national export champion

By John Thistleton
Business Editor

Canberra technology company CEA Technologies president David Gaul has been named a national champion of Australia's export community.

The award recognises individuals' outstanding contribution to building Australia's position and performance in international trade.

When Mr Gaul and his partner, Ian Crosser, set out to turn their radar technology into a business venture, they were confident it was equal to anything being imported to Australia, but were unaware of its huge export potential.

"We always felt we had the brains and ability to produce a product completely indigenous which did not need to be brought from overseas in that field."

American Defence officials checked out their radar systems in Brisbane and at Esso's Bass Strait plant, concluding it was five years ahead of anything they had seen.

The newly formed CEA Techno-

ENTERPRISING: David Gaul, of CEA Technologies, has been recognised for his export contribution.



logies subsequently won a \$60 million export contract from the United States in the early 1990s.

The Australian Institute of Export honoured Mr Gaul with its Australian Export Hero Award. He will join five others on April 30 at Government House to receive the award from Governor-General Quentin Bryce.

From a two-strong consultancy, Mr Gaul and Mr Crosser built CEA Technologies into a company which today employs more than 260 staff and turns over \$50 million annually.

The partners had always agreed to give feedback to others struggling to get their ideas into export markets.

Mr Gaul became the first president of an ACT exporters club, which is now the ACT Exporters Network, an affiliate of the Canberra Business Council which nominated him for the Export Hero Award.

Recounting that first export deal into the highly competitive American market, Mr Gaul said it would not have been possible without a national product development scheme funded by state and Commonwealth governments for projects that pushed the boundaries for Australian technology.

Business Council head Chris Faulks said she was thrilled to see

Mr Gaul's success. Ms Faulks said he continued to play a pivotal role in developing an export culture within CEA Technologies, local start-up companies and in the ACT generally.

"David's experience has been invaluable in guiding companies like Seeing Machines through the global product development stage."

Last year CEA Technologies began adding a \$20 million scientific research facility to its headquarters in Fyshwick. It is now putting in production units for its CEAFAR laser array radar for Anzac frigates for anti-ship missile defence requirement.

Mr Gaul said it was working with a US investor, Northrop Grumman, on activities that could lead to significant export orders in the long term.

ACT Exporters' Network manager Brooke Anderson said there was no shortage of people who wanted to contribute to Mr Gaul's award application because he had helped so many around him. Motivating ACT companies to export and growing an export culture drove growth, employment and economic activity.