

How much does the Earth move for you

A SUPER powerful eye will soon be set up in a Territory town that will allow boffins to detect tiny movements of the Australian continent.

The hi-tech telescope — set to be installed in Katherine — will be one of three that will use quasars, objects billions of light years away, as fixed points of reference.

The project involves a number of organisations including the University of Tasmania (UTAS), and the project team plans to lease some land from Charles Darwin University's Katherine campus to install the telescope.

UTAS AuScope project manager Dr Jim Lovell said the project aimed to improve measurements of continental drift from centimetres down to millimetres.

But, he said, measuring accurate positions was difficult because nothing on the Earth was fixed.



EYE IN SKY: The Katherine campus telescope will be a carbon copy of the UTAS Mount Pleasant Observatory

Construction of the Katherine telescope is scheduled to begin later this year with the facility expected to be operation by mid 2010.