

Australian WiFi inventors win US legal battle

April 1 2012



A reading room at the New York Public Library specifically for online users. Australian government science body CSIRO says it has won a multi-million-dollar legal settlement in the United States to license its patented technology that underpins the WiFi platform worldwide.

Australian government science body CSIRO said Sunday it had won a multi-million-dollar legal settlement in the United States to license its patented technology that underpins the WiFi platform worldwide.

Scientists from the agency invented the wireless [local area network](#) (WLAN) technology that is the basis of the WiFi signal employed by computers, smartphones and other Internet-ready devices around the world.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) patented the technology in the 1990s, and has been suing companies using it without a licence since 2005.

In 2009, CSIRO recouped Aus\$205 million (US\$212 million) after settling cases against 14 companies. The agency said it had now been awarded a further Aus\$220 million after reaching agreements with 23 more firms.

Australian Minister for Science and Research Chris Evans said in a statement that it was an important battle to win.

"It was important that Australia protect its intellectual property, and that those major companies who are selling billions of devices pay for the technology that they were using," he said.

Nigel Poole, a senior executive at CSIRO, said the agency was delighted with the result.



A banner announcing that WiFi is available hangs on a concourse at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. The invention of WiFi came out of CSIRO's pioneering work in radioastronomy.

"CSIRO's commercial and legal teams on both sides of the Pacific have worked very hard over the past several years to gain a reasonable return and I would like to pay particular tribute to them for their extraordinary efforts," he said.

"Of course, it was the inventors, led by Dr John O'Sullivan, whose brilliance in the 1990s made all this possible."

The invention came out of CSIRO's pioneering work in radioastronomy, with a team of its scientists cracking the problem of [radio waves](#) bouncing off surfaces indoors, causing an echo that distorts the signal.

They overcame it by building a fast chip that could transmit a signal while reducing the echo, beating many of the major [communications companies](#) around the world that were trying to solve the same issue.

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Citation: Australian WiFi inventors win US legal battle (2012, April 1) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-australian-wifi-inventors-legal.html>

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