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## Company from Deinze helps search for extraterrestrial life in Australia

The family business SwitchGear Company from Landegem near Deinze will supply the high-voltage cabins for an observatory in the Australian desert. They scan the universe with antennas that look like metal Christmas trees. In this way they hope to learn more about the origins of the cosmos and possible extraterrestrial life.

Radio 2, Geert Houck

Mon 22 Jan 15:31

In Western Australia, about 700 kilometers north of the city of Perth, built an observatory with 132,000 radio telescopes. Those look like metal Christmas trees and must receive signals from space. It will be the largest radio astronomy project in the world.

An East Flemish family business is also involved in the construction: SwitchGear Company (SGC) from Landegem near Deinze. For more than 40 years, the company has specialized in medium-voltage switchgear, commonly referred to as high-voltage cabinets. They convert high voltage into low voltage.



Sophie Vandoorne at a switch box that supplies the antennas with power

“Thanks to an Australian partner, with whom we have already completed several projects there, we are now involved in this project,” says Sophie Vandoorne of SGC. “We are allowed to install the high-voltage cabinets there that will supply the antennas with power. They chose us because the telescopes should last at least 50 years. We work with thick copper, which makes the lifespan very long. In addition, it must also be able to withstand the high temperatures of the desert. Now it is high summer there and

50 degrees is not unusual there. They will investigate the origins of the universe and possible extraterrestrial life.”



The first antennas are already being installed in Australia  
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For the project, SGC has recruited additional staff to make the switchboards, which are an important part of the high-voltage cabinets. “But here in Belgium, panel builder is a bottleneck profession,” says Sophie Vandoorne. “That is why, in consultation with the Philippine Embassy, we brought the Philippines here to do that work.”

## Family business from Landegem is participating in the largest space observatory in the world in Australia



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