

British firm builds 'flying saucer'

LONDON, Tuesday (AAP). — A 400-tonne "flying saucer" being developed in Britain could be seen over Australia in three years, the developers say.

The Skyship, as it is called, looks like a flying saucer and plans are under way to build a 213-metre craft that can carry 400 tonnes of cargo at 145km/h.

The design-team leader, Mr John West, said Australia had already shown an interest in the project.

"A couple of Australians from an air-cargo company on King Island in Bass Strait came to see the plans last September", he said.

"They were very interested and we expect further interest from Australia. The Skyship is ideal for many areas of Australia".

A 98-metre diameter prototype was unveiled at the weekend and has sparked wide interest in Britain, the

prototype will make its maiden flight around a huge hangar in Bedfordshire closely watched by British civil-aviation authorities.

The designers say the hangar would be an ideal place to build a bigger prototype, capable of carrying 50 people which could be on the market in 18 months.

Mr West said the 800-tonne Skyship, powered by 10 Rolls-Royce engines would follow in three years and could be in Australia by this time.

Middle East, West Africa and Canada.

On Thursday the radio-controlled 2.5-metre high prototype will make its