



University of
South Australia

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Innovation, Sciences and Resources

Developing Australia's Space Industry

University of South Australia Submission

28th January 2021



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Developing Australia's space industry

UniSA Submission

The University of South Australia (UniSA) offers the following comments in support of the subject Standing Committee.

- Development of an Australian space industry and capability can't be done in isolation; we need to collaborate with our international partners; largely via existing and emerging strategic relationships with the numerous international defence and space companies with a strong presence in Australia.
- Similarly, international research is key and will enable knowledge transfer and encourage collaboration. However, there must be appropriate funding mechanisms to facilitate this collaboration. A mechanism similar to the AUSMURI - Australia–US Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative Program may be appropriate. Other initiatives may include international personnel exchanges for the public and private sectors in various countries.
- If the Australian space sector engages with overseas-owned primes; we need to encourage these space 'Primes' to develop the industry here to develop a sovereign industrial capability. The defence sector is a good example of how many companies have contributed to the development of a local capability.
- Australia has the potential to be a leader in space research and development. This must be appropriately funded; and focused on agreed priority disciplines.
- Workforce development, job creation and skilling are critical. The current forecasts of 20,000 jobs appear a little high. (By comparison, the \$200bn investment in defence capital projects is creating approximately 5-10,000 jobs over a decade.)
- The Australian space sector has an opportunity to draw on less traditional resources and skills as we grow the space sector. Space is largely a STEM driven discipline, and like similar STEM driven industries, females tend to be under-represented. There are also opportunities to engage with the Australian Indigenous communities as we grow the sector. Consideration could be given to training and skilling scholarships to broaden the



diversity of the space sector.

- The Australian Space Sector is characterised by a very small number of large companies (mostly international), few medium sized companies; and hundreds of start-ups, scale-ups and small companies. Whilst innovative and smart, these companies often struggle to attract non-diluting early stage funding or early customers in order to progress to a point where they are self-sufficient and profitable. Part of the solution to this challenge can be found in business incubators and entrepreneurial programs such as UniSA's Venture Catalyst Space Program.
- An Australian Space Sector Strategy must include a Training, Education and Skills plan. Each January, since 2011 in conjunction with the International Space University, UniSA hosts the Southern Hemisphere Space Studies Program (SHSSP) Training and Education. This leading tertiary space sector education program includes more than 50 students from 10 countries and is an excellent example of Australian leadership of an international space program.
- We recommend support for international start-up founders to set up operations in Australia by enabling high potential space start-ups with access to a visa that leads to residency. UniSA's Venture Catalyst Space program, and others like it, attract international applications which have great potential, yet we can't support them to set up permanently in Australia beyond the length of the program due to limited visa options. The current option – the Global Talent visa is designed to support *employees not employers*, and as such early stage founders who are not yet generating a salary (which is the case for almost all founders) are limited in how they can establish operations in Australia. This situation inhibits the ability of the Australian space industry to grow the space sector.

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