



SENATE SPACE INQUIRY, 2008.

THE CURRENT STATE OF AUSTRALIA'S SPACE SCIENCE & INDUSTRY SECTOR.

SPACE – NO AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER.

In 1967, Australia launched the WRESAT satellite, thereby becoming one of the first four countries (the exact order is still in dispute) to successfully launch a home-grown satellite. Of those four countries (Russia, America, France and Australia), and in what I consider to be a colossal waste of money and opportunity, Australia is the **ONLY** country that seems to have left it at that.

It could be argued that we have had all the advantages, and lost them. We were invited and indeed almost begged to join the European (ELDO) space programme, and we refused. We've been invited to join its successor E.S.A., and we've said no to that, too. Our relationship with N.A.S.A. is well, not what it could and should be. We had a premier launch facility at Woomera, and we **PULLED IT DOWN** and used the remains for army target practice. We have passed up opportunities to build spaceports at Woomera, Cape York, Christmas Island and Grove Creek. And we still dare and like to call ourselves a Clever Country...

Why, when we have seemingly done our best to deliberately avoid any involvement with space matters at all, and to discourage those few courageous souls who insisted on bucking this trend? We make it so our best and brightest have to leave the country to survive. We seem to revel in our "heroes", but they aren't normally astronauts or the military or even Police or emergency services personnel, they're almost all sportspeople or actors.

There are all sorts of practical reasons why we should reconsider our stand on space. It's not science fiction, although the fictional Star Wars series itself has made a financial killing...! It's real, it's practical, and we need to be better involved in it to survive in the world of 2020 and beyond...

Almost everything we do now depends on an involvement, no matter how tenuous, with space technology. Communications, the internet, banking, news, information, entertainment; all use satellite technology. But to date we rely on everyone else to help design, build and launch the satellites we need, or else we buy and/or rent these from other countries who have them. Why can't Australia become one of these countries, and why should we remain dependent on countries whose benevolence to us might one day change; or who might well lose their own ability to stay in the space "race", and therefore be unable to continue to help us as well; or who might even tire of having to carry us, and seek more active participants from countries who then end up as our competitors?

The four main space-faring entities are: America, Russia, the E.S.A. and China. Other countries that have at least a national Government space body include Japan, Canada, India and even Indonesia... Australia is the only relatively advanced nation that has NO Government space instrumentality of any kind. Worse still, we DID have a co-ordinating Government space body once; the Australian Space Office: it was founded in 1987, but we cleverly closed it in 1996...

We do have three Australians who have been in the Astronaut corps, with two of them actually becoming Astronauts (Dr. Andrew Thomas and Paul Scully-Power; the third, Dr. Philip Chapman, never flew). We have designed scientific and research modules that have flown on space shuttles. Our “dishes” help in transmitting and receiving manifold signals from space. Australian companies have involvement in various aspects of space technology. Indeed, our scientists and engineers are among the best in the world on many fronts.

But there is no co-ordinating body here, and no focus for them to base their activities from. We have many good space activist groups but no activity. People would generally support a closer and more practical involvement in space industry matters, maybe even in pure space research, were things properly explained to them; and that’s no longer difficult with the internet the way it is... Moreover, if we wish to survive as a major national player to any degree in 2020, if we even wish to be considered a first world nation by 2020, we will need to play a much larger and more visible role in the space industry.

We have ministers State and Federal who include sport as a major if not sole part of their portfolios; why not a space ministry for something that we so desperately need and may potentially benefit from? If this Government is serious about the future, it has to better embrace the fact that our future has to involve space.

We need a Government space body. We need a space industry. And, one day, we’ll need a space port. Will an Australian Prime Minister and Government promise that, by 2020, Australia will again be a serious player in the space game, and have the honesty and ability to actually carry it out?

I hope so.



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