



## Scubayorp STEM Outreach

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Committee Secretary  
House Standing Committee on Industry, Innovation, Science and Resources  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Sent to: [ijsr.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ijsr.reps@aph.gov.au)

Date: 14 December 2020

Re: **Inquiry into Developing Australia's Space Industry**

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Dear sir/madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to this important inquiry.

I am the Managing Director of a sole trader, start-up business operating out of Perth, WA. I started from very low (welfare recipient) financial base and grown as, and when resources allowed. Though COVID19 very much placed my business into hibernation, the future looks bright. I use my academic qualifications, cool equipment, and passion to spread amazing knowledge about space and astronomy to the public. I was a finalist in the recent Australian Space Awards.

I have had some input into the reviews and establishment of the Australian Space Agency and continue to speak with them about their public outreach efforts. My participation in the

educational side of the industry becomes obvious if you surf my web site and social media pages. I believe my personal academic trajectory reflects my interest and knowledge in space and STEM outreach:

- PhD candidate (Topic: Astronomical Research Excellence) at Curtin University of Technology,
- Master of Science (Astronomy) from Swinburne University of Technology,
- Graduate Diploma Education (Double Science Methods) from Monash University,
- Graduate Certificate (Space Science) from University of South Australia,
- Executive Certificate (Space Studies) from International Space University,
- Bachelor of Science (Applied Biology) from Curtin University,
- Certificate IV (Training, Assessment & Evaluation),
- Certificate III (Aviation).

This three page submission sits within the fifth dot-point of the Committee's Terms of reference, namely "Other related matters". Since the Committee "... will focus on how the Australian Government can support and encourage the space industry ...", I believe it is appropriate to campaign for much greater grass-roots exposure so that current and future voters have a positive attitude towards the space industry as a whole, and are not dismissive of its existence.

The Nov. 30 Media Release of Hon Barnaby Joyce MP stated, in part, that the inquiry "... will examine ... what is required to strengthen support of our domestic ... space related activities ...". It also stated that "Space is an industry that inspires, fascinates and excites people." "... its technology and equipment are very much a part of our day-to-day lives..." and "There are enormous opportunities for individuals, organisations, and communities ... particularly in rural and regional areas." These motherhood statements must be subjected to tangible follow-through in terms of reaching out to the general public and *inspiring, fascinating and exciting* them. This will require dedication, systematic changes and decadal funding.

I strongly believe that the historical, failed iterations of an Australian government space 'authority' have suffered due to the poor connections made to the general public's mind. The current Space Agency simply cannot afford to leave Mums, Dads and children out of their thinking. It is also not enough to just encourage outreach centres like Questacon, VSSEC and others. Yes, *some* of the general public and students may have access to these fabulous outreach organisations, but there is a huge gap between attendees and the vast majority of the population for whom science and space isn't just a mystery but an oddity belonging to nerds and politicians.

As you know, the first four dot points of the Committee's Terms of Reference are:

- Development of space satellites, technology and equipment;
- International collaboration, engagement and missions;
- Commercialisation of research and development, including flow on benefits to other industry sectors;
- Future research capacity, workforce development and job creation; and

I also firmly believe that each of these points will be positively reinforced by effective, longitudinal input into general public awareness. A proud, interested and aware general public will have huge economic flow-on advantages for development of hardware, international collaborations,

commercialisation of R&D and overall workforce capacity. This will require long-sighted political commitment that may supersede party-political priorities.

From my personal and business perspective, I try to give friends who will listen, and customers who pay, a taste of the amazing things being done 'in space' by academics, engineers and entrepreneurs. I tease them with amazing facts, sights and activities that elicit many 'oohs', 'aahs' and thanks for enlightening them.

For me, the space industry is not just about economics and I really hope that that is the case for the Committee. The space industry is about wonder, solutions to terrestrial problems, amazement, profit, enlightenment, new products, frontiers, potential and humanity.

The question becomes: How to place a positive mindset (not just education) into the general public's mind?

People and institutions that are cleverer than me must surely be able to devise marketing and development programs that drill down to the target audience over sustained periods, so that a measurable and effective improvement is created in the average Aussie's socio-political acceptance of our space industry, its value, coolness and deservedness of pride.

Personal experience with my start-up is that there are far too many administrative impediments, hurdles and restrictions that make dissemination of my product very difficult. Local, state and federal fees and conditions are often prohibitive for no good reason. Processing of permissions and authorisations for my events can be ludicrously cumbersome and ignorantly slow. These processes need to be agile and responsive to weather conditions and also less expensive for small start-ups that are trying to help the general public. Start-ups that are simply newly-registered ABNs of existing SMEs have an unfair advantage and discourage grass-roots attempts like mine. I know many operators in my field who could make substantial contributions to public awareness, as well as flourish economically, if only they had the same consideration as 'the big boys'.

The disconnect between new-space entrepreneurs/academics/suits/politicians and the voting public must be honestly addressed, not just through supported outreach entities, but through a sustained, visible presence in all forms of media. Money must be spent! Over a long period of time. We do it for health issues and safety issues. Commercials do it for economic profit. Even privatised utilities do it for sustained public visibility. The space industry should do the same. There are many, many locations where we can advertise, promote and promulgate our amazing future in this influential industry. Traditional media, social media, billboards, bumper stickers, park benches, public footpaths, sign posts, merchandise. We must use them all.

Thank you, again, for your attention to this issue.

Kind regards,

**Rob Hunt**

*PhD (Cand) | MD Scubayorp STEM Outreach*

*Scubayorp acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.*

*We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Elders past, present and emerging.*