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Author: Ms. Crystal Forrester
Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC), Australia, forresc@gmail.com

DEVELOPING A WAY FORWARD FOR AUSTRALIAN SPACE

Abstract

Australia has a long history of involvement in Space activities including the Redstone rocket launches from Woomera; satellite development, launch and operation; and the use of the Parks Radio Telescope in the Apollo moon landing. Today Australia is active in Space Science, and Remote Sensing activities with a focus on GIS and value adding for Meteorological services, disaster management, emergency services, urban planning and farming. Recently, the Australian Government has recognised the importance of Space related technology and activities to the social, economic, environmental and national security needs of Australia and in its dealings with the international community. With many years experience in space activities, but currently no structured Space sector or national space policy, Australia has a unique opportunity to define its own way forward and devise a structure that addresses these needs. The first steps towards this were achieved through the establishment of the 'Space Industry Innovation Council' and of the 'Space Policy Unit' under the direction of the 'Department of Innovation, Industry Science and Research'; however, as yet there is no clear idea of what final structure will work for the Australian situation. Some questions being considered involve the content of an Australian National Space Policy; whether Government or Industry should run and fund a body to coordinate Space activities; whether Australia should have a separate Space organisation and industry or whether these activities should be integrated within several existing industries; the best way to coordinate national and international activities; and the future direction for Australian Space. These questions must be addressed before Australia can realise the full benefits of current and future space activities and significantly contribute to international ventures.

To address this issue a study was undertaken aiming to devise a structure for an Australian Space Sector, the results of which are outlined in this paper. The study involved research into Australia's space activities; the structures of single- and multi-State space organisations; current Australian organisations and governmental structures; and the requirements of an organised structure to address social and economic needs. This was done via several methods including a questionnaire completed by individuals both within Australia and internationally. The proposed structure consists of a separate Space organisation that coordinates a series of smaller units integrated into other industry and government sectors, requiring collaboration between Government and Private Organisations. Some of the operational, financial and implementation challenges of such a structure are also addressed.