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THE KOONIBBA TEST RANGE, A COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN SOUTHERN LAUNCH AND AUSTRALIA'S FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

Abstract

Spanning over 10,000 square kilometers of uninhabited Australian outback, the Koonibba Test Range is designed to enable the launch and subsequent recovery of suborbital sounding rockets.

The launch site has been a collaborative development between Southern Launch, a space launch company in Australia, and the local First Nation's people living in Koonibba, a town of over 140 people. Australia's First Nation's people have the world's oldest culture and a long history with the stars.

Together the Koonibba community and Southern Launch have forged an enduring relationship that brings together the proud community and modern space launch capabilities and have created a new economy for the local area.

Through targeted training programs provided to the Koonibba community members, and strategic support for the acquisition of critical infrastructure, Southern Launch has helped the Koonibba community generate additional income streams for their community members and provide the youth in the community with the inspiration and vision for a new future for Koonibba at the very forefront of modern space technology.

This paper explores the development of, and first launches at the Koonibba Test Range, the ongoing relationship Southern Launch has developed with the community, plans for future community involvement in space launch activities, and the vision for a long range overland suborbital launch facility in the Australian outback.