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THE KOONIBBA TEST RANGE: HOW AUSTRALIA'S FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE ANSWER TO
GLOBAL MARKET DEMAND FOR NEWSPACE ACTIVITIES

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 is an intensely collaborative effort between Australian launch services provider Southern Launch and the First Nation's people living in the Koonibba area. Australia's First Nation's people hold the world's oldest recorded astronomical records and, thus, have history with the stars spanning back at least 45,000 years. Together the Koonibba community and Southern Launch have forged an enduring relationship bringing together the proud community and modern space launch capabilities. The result is a new and increased economic activity for the local area which supports Australia's develop of a sovereign space launch capability meeting the rising global market demand concerning small launch vehicles. 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 and operations the Koonibba Test Range. Topics discussed include logistics, commercial and regulatory considerations of establishing a launch site in the outback, the benefits such launch sites provide to the market, the ongoing relationship between industry and community, plans for future community involvement in space launch activities and the vision for a long range overland suborbital launch facilitation from the outback Australian.