

## IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)

## Ignition - Primary Space Education (1)

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## SPACE AS A TOOL FOR INSPIRATION: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

**Abstract**

Engaging and empowering students from an early age is the key to exposing the breadth of career opportunities available, particularly across STEM related fields. Until recently, space careers have not been considered accessible or well-known across Australia, resulting in both the education curriculum and teaching staff remaining relatively 'in the dark' about the new era opportunities available.

With the Australian Space Agency's goal of achieving a workforce of 30,000 strong by 2030, time is critical to ensure that Australia's next generation of future space leaders are receiving innovative and accessible experiences.

As part of the Andy Thomas Space Foundation's (ATSF) inaugural Education Fund in 2021 a pilot program based around the design-thinking pedagogy and space-based challenges was rolled out to 9 schools across South Australia. With engaging opportunities built into the program for both students and teachers, the goal was to implement a sustainable and impactful program that highlights various capabilities and talents of young students.

The pilot program in 2021 was a resounding success, leading to a repeat of the program in 2022 with 10 schools across the state. As a result of great learnings and a program partnership with the Australian Space Agency, the ATSF was proud to announce a national 'Kids in Space' program to be rolled out to 8 schools per state and territory in 2023. Accessibility to programs such as the Kids in Space challenge have the ability to enlighten students and unlock their potential and passion for the space industry or associated STEM sectors.