



The Andy Thomas Space Foundation Launches the 2022 Inclusion Initiative Pilot Program

18 July 2022

The Andy Thomas Space Foundation is proud to today announce the Launch of our inaugural Inclusion Initiative pilot program, supported by the Australian Space Agency, Maras Foundation and SmartSat CRC.

Part of the ATSF Education Fund 2022, the Inclusion Initiative will offer engaging and accessible education opportunities designed specifically for students and young people living with a disability.

“This pilot program, which will be known as 'The Aurora Program' aims to inspire young generations living with a disability by the wonder of space, whilst raising funds to provide appropriate support and encouragement for such individuals working in or wishing to work in the space sector,” says ATSF CEO, Nicola Sasanelli.

The pilot program launches today at the Australian Space Discovery Centre with a mission briefing event, attended by participating schools representatives, the Hon Susan Close MP, Head of the Australian Space Agency, Enrico Palermo, Founder and Chairmen of the Maras Group, Theo Maras AM and CEO of SmartSat CRC, Andy Koronios.

This initiative is well suited to contribute to the Australian Space Agency’s strategy, specifically touching on its fourth pillar, Inspire.

“The Australian Space Agency is committed to inspiring the nation to build a future space workforce that is diverse and provides career opportunities for all Australians” Mr Palermo said.

“The Inclusion Initiative Pilot Program will provide important learnings to make the space industry more accessible, aligning with the ‘Agency’s ‘Inclusive’ value, which is focused on embracing our differences and drawing strength from diversity.”

During this briefing, participating schools will receive further information about the programs, have an opportunity to explore the centre to assist in student transitions as well as pick up their schools very own 3D printer. These printers, part of the innovative pedagogical approach of South Australian EdTech start-up Makers Empire, will play a major role in the challenge component of the program, allowing students and young people to design an object inspired by their visits to the ASDC which would assist in the travel to or long-term life in space.

Schools participating in the 2022 Pilot program include:

- Compass Catholic Community
- Thomas More College
- Modbury Special School
- Craigmore High School Disability Unit
- Findon High School Disability Unit

- Roma Mitchell Secondary College Disability Unit
- Springbank Secondary College Disability Unit
- Bowden Brompton Community School

The ATSF promotes and inspires students through the idea that space is for all. Independent of backgrounds, skillsets, qualifications – whilst study is important, so to is your determination and passion for the industry. Mr Maras has shared his thoughts on the opening of this pathway stating ‘there are currently 1 in 6 Australians living with a disability, including Autism, which affects 1 in 70 Australians. We have a duty to develop a supportive and empowering environment to promote inclusion and facilitate the next generations growth in a new workforce’. Whilst Prof Andy Koronios, CEO of SmartSat CRC has said that “As one of the most important university-industry collaborations in the country SmartSat is dedicated to be supporting the growth of the industry as well as increase Australia’s space workforce. This includes Australians living with a disability of whom only 17% hold a Bachelor’s degree’.

The Foundation, alongside supporting partners, aim to develop this initiative to a national level through the support of philanthropic and government contributions, further building the offering of the 2023 Andy Thomas Space Foundation Education Fund.

Supporting Organisations:



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Associated Organisations:

Australian Space Agency: <https://www.industry.gov.au/policies-and-initiatives/australian-space-agency>

Maras Foundation: <https://www.marasgroup.com.au/social-responsibility/>

SmartSat CRC: <https://smartsatcrc.com/>