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**Chief Scientist for Australia**

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## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NASA Space Tracking Treaty

Remarks from the Chief Scientist at celebrations for the  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NASA Space Tracking Treaty

Thursday 25 February 2010

Venue: Senatorial Courtyard, Parliament House,  
Canberra

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- Thank you Minister Carr
- Welcome to His Excellency Jeffrey Bleich, Mr William Gerstenmaier, Dr Megan Clark, Dr Miriam Baltuck, Dr. Charles Elachi, Mr Mark Paterson, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman
- I would also like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people and their ancestors as the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today here at Parliament House.
- The first Australians, as all humans, have always had a special relationship to space.
- The annual twirling dance of the heavens, swinging familiar star patterns in an endless cycle across the skies, some to disappear and reappear again, told our ancestors when to plant, and when to hunt and fish.
- The changeable but predictable moon lit human footsteps in the dark of the night, and provided an ever present calendar.
- Occasional comets, eclipses and meteors stirred a sense of awe and inspired curiosity about what might exist just beyond our grasp.
- Last year, during National Science Week, an event called 'The First Astronomers' brought Bill Yidumduma Harney, senior custodian of the Wardaman people, and Ray Norris, a UK born and

educated CSIRO astrophysicist together in Darwin. They explored their separate experiences of the sky and the meaning it holds for humanity.

- This event was but a single example of how astronomy, like music and art, can build a strong bridge of understanding between all peoples.
- We all share the same sky. It belongs to all of us, and we to it.
- Collaboration in science, across sovereign boundaries and amongst different scientific disciplines is vital to increase understanding of the world around us and find solutions global problems.
- After all, nature does not distinguish between the disciplines of science or between the boundaries of our nation states.
- The treaty we celebrate here today is a living example of collaboration across sovereign boundaries for the greater good of the human race.
- NASA's Deep Space network has been responsible for many great discoveries about the breath-taking beauty and complexity of the universe, and Australia is proud to have played its part.
- But the deep space network brings us more than just the adventurous journeys into space that the public would be aware of.

- Its technology and partnership are just one of the many bricks in a foundation of increasing Australian expertise in space science that will enable mysteries to be solved by Australians using satellites to both look up and to look down to study our own home.
- Data from space provides fundamental environmental information that allows us to efficiently monitor the atmosphere, oceans, crops, forests, natural resources, natural disasters, and national boundaries – information that is vital to a safe and economic Australia.
- Space data is also essential to help us to find global solutions to many of the complex problems we face today such as climate change, water shortages, food security, and many others.
- Australia plays a lead role in many of these areas, but it doesn't do so alone. Our strengths are multiplied and we can do so much more through collaborations with strong partners like NASA.
- It is, therefore, a pleasure and an honour to be here today celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Australian-US NASA Space Tracking Treaty, a collaboration that continues to advance science for all of humanity.
- I hand the proceedings over to Dr Megan Clark, Chief Executive of the CSIRO. Dr Clark.