

**AUSTRALIAN SPACE**

# OUTLOOK

2022 EDITION

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### Enrico Palermo

Head, Australian Space Agency

**INTERVIEWS**

Air Vice-Marshal Catherine Roberts, Defence Space Commander

Aude Vignelles, CTO, Australian Space Agency

Richard Price, CEO, Defence SA & SASIC

Phil Randerson, Australian Business Development Executive for Space, KBR

Joel Nevin, Director and Co-founder, Blacktree Technology

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KBR's Principal Partner, Rob Hawketts, VP Government Solutions APAC, giving the welcoming speech at the 2022 Australian Space Awards.



58

# KBR brings a 65-year space heritage to Australia

The scale of Australia's ambition in space, and the creation of the Australian Space Agency as an international portal to the marketplace, means that a growing number of international companies is showing an interest in Australian space operations. Some of them are long-established hardware manufacturers with a proud heritage. Others, like KBR, bring a different focus to the business. The company's Australian Business Development Executive for Space, Phil Randerson, spoke to **Gregor Ferguson**.

IMAGES: Supplied

“One of KBR’s strengths is that it can reach back for the skillsets that supported NASA as well as current US Government and military programs. That gives KBR in Australia the skills and expertise needed to understand and then enhance the missions of both the Australian Space Agency and Defence Space Command.”

**K**BR, or Kellogg, Brown & Root Pty Ltd to use its historic name, is a global science, technology and engineering company that boasts proudly it has supported every crewed space mission NASA has ever conducted and supported every US astronaut since 1968. Today it provides command and control, communications, telemetry and tracking for more than 170 military satellites operated by the US government and its allies, many of them involved in Space Domain Awareness (SDA).

That is the company’s heritage in space, says Randerson.

Its Australian space operations, though nascent, are built on the Australian government’s stated ambition and on the growth of Australia’s space industry, which is composed mainly of small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and startup companies. While Defence has a \$7 billion pipeline for approved space projects, the Defence space shopping list is closer to \$19 billion, and that quantum has game-changing potential.

Many of the SMEs operating in Australia’s growing space sector lack the size and structure to work effectively through the Australian government’s procurement processes. But pursuing the Australian market alone will not allow them to grow. If they face these troubles in the Australian market, they will face even greater challenges trying to work with the governments of other space-savvy Five Eyes nations such as the USA and UK, believes Randerson.

“The space industry in Australia is made up of a number of organisations, including cutting-edge innovators, but ultimately there are numerous small businesses that need support in order to be able to work and contract with government,” he tells *Australian Space OUTLOOK*. “And that’s where KBR has the ability to help bridge the gap for

those companies and help them to deliver their capabilities to government in support of the Australian space mission.”

KBR is a largely product agnostic company, he points out, so has the flexibility to work with different companies and government agencies without any risk of competing with itself or compromising a partner’s IP.

The company’s footprint in Australia is extensive enough to support its ambitions. It employs 1,800 people and is established in the defence market as a systems integrator and innovation partner. Space is a new direction for the company in the Asia-Pacific region, says Randerson.

“We’re really in the early days of building out a strategy in terms of how we want to support the space industry and space domain within the Asia-Pacific region,” he says. KBR in Australia can reach back to a 65-year US space heritage. Its military space organisation is very much focused on capabilities that support SDA, and integrated space missile defence, and it runs multiple sites around the world directly supporting both US Government and Defence, and NASA space missions.

“There’s a lot of expertise in the US business in terms of scientific research and development of future capability,” he tells *Australian Space OUTLOOK*. “So in terms of our footprint here in Australia, what we’re trying to do is access those capabilities and skillsets so that we can adapt them to best support the Australian space mission, whether that be civil or defence.”

Australia’s lead in space is set by the Australian Space Agency, but it has a significant defence focus as well, and organisations seeking to work with the Agency need to understand this, he believes. One of KBR’s strengths is that it can reach back for the skillsets that supported NASA as well as current US



KBR Australian Business Development Executive for Space, Phil Randerson

Government and military programs. That gives KBR in Australia the skills and expertise needed to understand and then enhance the missions of both the Australian Space Agency and Defence Space Command.

The capabilities of Defence Space Command are critical to protecting our space assets, he adds. “Obviously assuring access to space is critical for any mission that launches, whether it be commercial, government or military. Without that assurance of access it makes it very difficult for companies within Australia to invest with confidence. Of equal importance is protecting the existing capabilities that we all rely on, even things like the GPS in our cars.”

So, is KBR an above the line company (that is working for the government), or below the line (working as a supplier)?

“In the space context right now we’re neither because we’re very much in the early days of developing our space strategy,” says Randerson. “We are really beginning the journey of approaching the market. So we have both options available to us. There are so many different aspects of support that are required at the moment, that sometimes the best thing we can do is to work with the government; for example, to help scope requirements, and that really plays into that above the line space.”

“Using the skills that we have across our business and the breadth of work that we do, we’re naturally positioned to pivot and to support the space mission in that way.” ●