



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **CALL FOR AUSTRALIAN INVOLVEMENT IN NEW U.S. SPACE PROGRAM**

In a speech to NASA Headquarters in Washington D.C. today, U.S. President George W. Bush has announced an inspiring new course for human space exploration through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As he notes, in the past 30 years, human beings have not set foot on any other world, nor ventured farther upward into space than 386 miles. This is about to change.

He said, "America is proud of our space program. The risk takers and visionaries of this agency have expanded human knowledge, have revolutionized our understanding of the universe, and produced technological advances that have benefited all of humanity.

"Inspired by all that has come before, and guided by clear objectives, today we set a new course for America's space program. We will give NASA a new focus and vision for future exploration. We will build new ships to carry man forward into the universe, to gain a new foothold on the moon, and to prepare for new journeys to worlds beyond our own."

President Bush sees the return to the Moon as a precursor to journeys in our solar system to places such as Mars.

"With the experience and knowledge gained on the moon, we will then be ready to take the next steps of space exploration: human missions to Mars and to worlds beyond. Robotic missions will serve as trailblazers -- the advanced guard to the unknown. Probes, landers and other vehicles of this kind continue to prove their worth, sending spectacular images and vast amounts of data back to Earth. Yet the human thirst for knowledge ultimately cannot be satisfied by even the most vivid pictures, or the most detailed measurements. We need to see and examine and touch for ourselves. And only human beings are capable of adapting to the inevitable uncertainties posed by space travel."

According to the President, the Space Shuttle will be retired in 2010, once construction of the International Space Station has been completed. This will complete America's obligations to its partners on the Space Station project. A new spacecraft, the Crew Exploration Vehicle, will be developed and tested by 2008, for use in the first manned mission, to be conducted no later than 2014.

The goal is to return to the moon by 2020, as the launching point for missions beyond. Beginning no later than 2008, a series of robotic missions will be sent to the lunar surface to research and prepare for future human exploration. Using the Crew Exploration Vehicle, they will then undertake extended human missions to the moon as early as 2015, with the goal of living and working there for increasingly extended periods.

This program may have far-reaching benefits for humankind, as the President noted in his speech. "We may discover resources on the moon or Mars that will boggle the imagination, that will test our limits to dream. And the fascination generated by further exploration will inspire our young people to study math, and science, and engineering and create a new generation of innovators and pioneers."

It will also be done in a spirit of international co-operation, according to the President. He said, "We'll invite other nations to share the challenges and opportunities of this new era of discovery. The vision I outline today is a journey, not a race, and I call on other nations to join us on this journey, in a spirit of cooperation and friendship."

Mars Society Australia applauds this bold vision and calls on the Australian Government to do what it can to support the United States in achieving this ambitious goal, which has enormous ramifications for mankind.

Says the President of Mars Society Australia, Guy Murphy, "We urge Prime Minister John Howard to consider taking up this invitation from the United States and commit to an Australian participation in the further exploration of the Moon and the solar system. Such involvement can only benefit Australia in terms of skills and technology development and economic spin-offs and will act as a great inspiration to people everywhere, and our youth in particular.

"Sending humans to Mars is the great exploration challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with immense implications for science, technology and broader human culture. It is a grand vision and it will take human endeavour to the very limits of what we are currently capable of doing. It won't be cheap and it may ultimately lead to failures and require sacrifices. But those who take part, such as the Columbia astronauts, do so willingly, because they know that small dreams make small lives. We have always taken risks throughout history to push the bounds of knowledge, to explore, to learn, to achieve.

"The first pictures of the Earth from the Moon, taken by the Apollo astronauts, lead to the growth of the environmental movement, as human beings realised how fragile our planet was. Understanding Mars may inspire a new generation to be more solicitous of what we have and what the alternatives are to caring for our world. Finding life elsewhere in the solar system would also be a unique moment in human history; the answer to a question that has haunted human beings since time immemorial.

"Radiation on Mars, along with other issues such as differences in pressure, gravity and atmosphere, and the psychological impact of being so far from 'home,' are challenges to be overcome, but not show-stoppers. People have demonstrated that they can live for long periods on a space-station, even in the face of leaks and accidents such as on the Russian spacestation Mir and the International Space Station. Let's send them eventually to new worlds like the Moon and Mars, where they can show that same grit and determination to live in inhospitable places that our pioneer forebears knew so well.

"We look forward to a new era of Australian space involvement, following on from our proud history during the Apollo period, and call upon the Prime Minister to support this positive step by the United States Government."

**For interviews, please direct inquiries to Jennifer Laing, Public Relations Officer on email at [pr@marssociety.org.au](mailto:pr@marssociety.org.au) or phone (Melbourne, Australia) on 0417 135 113.**

**The Mars Society was founded to further the goal of the exploration and settlement of the Red Planet.**

**For further information on MSA, see <http://www.marssociety.org.au>**