

Australian Space Diversity Alliance Charter – 2024

1. Introduction

The Australian Space Diversity Alliance (ASDA) was established through the collective desire of many Australian space industry professionals seeking to promote the issue of inclusion, diversity, equity and access (IDEA). The aim of the ASDA is to enable all identities and intersectionalities to inspire innovation in the space sector, and to increase the participation of marginalised groups.

The Australian space sector is relatively young despite a rich history in space activities dating back to the 1960s. With the establishment of the Australian Space Agency in 2018 and Defence Space Command in 2022, the time is ripe for developing a foundation that ensures the sector represents the full spectrum of Australian capabilities and talent.

ASDA builds on the momentum of the inaugural “Diversity at the Frontier: Gender Equality in Space” conference held in Canberra in April 2023. Over 100 people gathered to discuss IDEA principles in the Australian space sector and set a pathway forward for greater participation and engagement.

Evidence shows that more diverse workforces bring greater innovation, better decision-making, and greater collaboration.

The statistics for IDEA participation in the space sector are low. The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) identifies that women represent on average only 20 percent of the international space industry. This figure has remained stagnant over the last 30 years. In Australia, women make up only 28 per cent of the workforce in science, technology, engineering, and math. The participation of women in the space sector in Australia is likely closer to 20 percent, with other minority groups even lower at less than five percent. There is obvious room for improvement across all diversity groups.

There is an enormous opportunity in Australia with a growing industry to normalise and mandate equality and leadership from the start. Increasing diversity can contribute to meeting the Australian Space Agency’s Civil Space Strategy workplace goals.

This Charter acts as a guiding tool for establishing ASDA and should be reviewed regularly.

2. Purpose

The purpose of ASDA is to transform and extend participation of diverse and minoritised groups in space to achieve a thriving and innovative space community that reflects the capability of the nation.

Building on the foundations of IDEA, ASDA is open to all who support diversity, regardless of their background or how they identify.

3. Values

ASDA is underpinned by values of IDEA and supports the values identified by the UNOOSA Space4Women project. It is also guided by space industry values:

- Accessibility - to educate and empower the space industry to actively improve levels of equitable access to jobs, spaces, events and activities, including making space for diverse characteristics.
- Inclusion - to improve the experience of the space industry by a diverse workforce by empowering employers and leaders in the industry to create inclusive spaces and opportunities for connection.
- Respect – to acknowledge that all parts of society have a role to work together to resolve issues and that everyone is learning.
- Shared ambition – to work with other diversity-led initiatives and minority groups (e.g. CAL – culturally and linguistically diverse, Indigenous, youth etc) to achieve outcomes for the betterment of the nation.
- Recognition – to recognise the existing contributions and work of many individuals and organisations to address this imbalance and recognise those organisations who already embrace IDEA concepts and implement them meaningfully into their workplace.
- Empathy – to reflect that the issues faced by underrepresented groups comes with challenging and confronting stories.

- Openness – to create a space sector open to everyone, regardless of gender, sexuality, race, religion, disability, socio-economic background, education level, or anything else that impacts minorities and underrepresented groups.
- Curiosity – to continually strive for better outcomes through improved knowledge, understanding and personal development. This recognises that we are all learning.

4. Governance

The ASDA is currently hosted under Aviation/Aerospace Australia for a period of two years. During this period the ASDA will establish what type of organisation will be most appropriate for its objectives, activities, and capabilities.

Accordingly, this governance structure will be in place for up to two years:

a. National Committee

A National Committee has been established and will be in place for up to two years. The National Committee membership should not exceed 11 persons, with a quorum of 7. Members will serve for an initial 6 months, while the ASDA is establishing much needed governance and gaining momentum. The process for reviewing Committee members at this time is to be established. Membership should cover a range of skills and requires a commitment to contribute a minimum of 5 hours per calendar month on a voluntary basis. The National Committee selects the Chair for 6 months initially, and a calendar year thereafter. This National Committee is the decision making authority of the ASDA.

b. Sub-Committees

There can be as many sub-groups on specific topics of the National Committee as required. Currently there are seven active sub-committees: Governance; Media and Communications; Sponsor Management; Partnership Requests; Idea and Activity Generation; Members; Experience and Board Observations. Each Sub-Committee has a Chair and Ambassadors (sub-committee members).

c. Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is made up of critical advisors to the ASDA, who do not have the availability to commit to active governance. This group will include the founding members of ASDA not sitting on the National Committee, and can include members of supporting/sponsor institutions. The purpose of this group is to provide guidance to the National Committee. Past Chairs of the National Committee automatically become members of the Advisory Council. The National Committee does not sit under the Advisory Council, and there is no approval mechanism between these groups.

5. Goals

ASDA relies largely on volunteers to deliver major initiatives. The following goals reflects a strong desire, but the timeline for achieving each one needs to be developed while being cognisant of stakeholders, funding and membership needs.

- Establish sponsorship relationships and membership options, and subsequently a revenue stream into the ASDA.
- Establish a paid Executive Director position.
- Explore establishing a not-for-profit charity status.
- Run an annual national conference, building on the “Diversity at the Frontier: Gender Equality in Space” conference in 2025.
- Support Australian minoritised representatives to participate in committees of UNOOSA and the International Astronautical Federation (IAF).
- Attracting and leading high value conferences, meetings, policy discussions like the UN Space4Women expert meetings.
- Establish a database of member capability and skills.

6. Acknowledgement

ASDA acknowledges Australia’s First Nations’ People as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and gives respect to the Elders – past and present – and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.