

Australian Space Diversity Alliance (draft) Charter

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) to enable greater participation and innovation in the space sector.

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.

ASDA is a not-for-profit organisation that is bipartisan and independent to maintain its neutrality.

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:

- *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. Objectives

ASDA has three key objectives: Education, Advocacy and Sponsorship.

Education and Awareness

- Encourage accessibility for more individuals from minority groups to pursue careers in the space sector.
- Raise awareness of gender and IDEA issues.
- Support senior leaders in the space sector to understand issues regarding gender diversity and IDEA principles.
- Amplify diversity literature and research.

Acknowledging campaigns like ‘She Leads’ as part of online identity - Space Australia and largest women-only recruitment drive by the Advanced Instrumentation and Technology Centre to fill 10 positions with women achieves profile and recognition.

Advocacy

- Encourage diverse individuals to pursue career progression within the sector.
- Amplify the achievements of diverse minoritised groups.
- Advocate for IDEA implementation.
- Minimise the barriers that minoritised groups face in entering or staying in space careers.
- Advocate for all space related conferences to undertake a pledge to ensure IDEA is implemented.

This recognises that there is an urgent need to ‘join the dots’ and demonstrate the relevance of current gender and diversity policies in the space sector, space industry, space security, and responsible governance of space.

Sponsorship

Minoritised groups traditionally are over mentored and under sponsored. Thus ASDA has a stronger focus on more tangible opportunities:

- Provide support and professional development opportunities for those already working in the sector.
- Advocate for panel pledges to ensure minority groups are represented at major conferences.
- Ensure Australian minority representation on international committees like IAF and UN are supported.

5. Governance

This is intended as a guide of intent, recognising that ASDA will need to consult widely before implementation.

a. National Committee

A National Committee to be established and be in place for up to two years. Nominations can be received from any person that resonates with this Charter. The National Committee should not exceed 10 persons and should cover a range of skills, availability to contribute on a voluntary basis and geographic spread. The National Committee is selected by an Advisory Board. There can be as many sub-groups on specific topics of the National Committee as required. The National Committee selects the Chair for a year.

b. Advisory Board

The inaugural Advisory Board is made up of the founding members of ASDA. They can provide guidance to the National Committee. Past Chairs of the National Committee automatically become members of the Advisory Board. Members should not exceed five years of tenure, to support refresh.

c. Affiliated organisations

Recognising that there are many diversity-led organisations in Australia and internationally, ASDA recognises that combining and amplifying efforts will achieve greater outcomes. We acknowledge and seek close engagement with these groups.

6. Outputs

ASDA relies largely on volunteers to deliver major initiatives. The following output 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 a paid Executive Director position
- Establish a not-for-profit charity status.
- Run an annual national conference, building on the “Diversity at the Frontier: Gender Equality in Space” conference.
- 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.

7. 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.