

SmartSat, Andy Thomas Space Foundation award two Peter Woodgate Scholarships for research on Australia's eucalypt forests and archaeological landscapes

Adelaide, 13 December 2023 – [SmartSat Cooperative Research Centre \(SmartSat\)](#), Australia's leading space research centre, in collaboration with the [Andy Thomas Space Foundation](#), today named two Australian PhD students as the inaugural recipients of [Dr Peter Woodgate Scholarships for Earth Observation](#).

Donna Fitzgerald, from the University of South Australia, and Oliver Hatswell, from Flinders University, will each receive scholarships valued at \$35,000 per year for their respective research projects.

Donna's project involves quantifying the dieback of eucalypt forests and vegetation health changes over time using comparative remote sensing techniques to monitor forest health. The findings will be used to develop a remote sensing and scenario-based framework for dieback analytics in other forests.

Professor Andy Koronios, CEO of SmartSat CRC, said that Donna's experience in Environment and Natural Resources will contribute immensely to the research project.

"We're delighted to award this scholarship to Donna Fitzgerald. We believe her project mirrors the scope of the scholarship, and the proposed research methods were very sound. Given Australia's climate change challenges, her research is a critical area of work."

"Dr Peter Woodgate began working in 1976 with the Forest Commission of Victoria as a crew leader in hardwood assessment. He later held positions as officer-in-charge of the Dieback Research Station in Yarram. The government highly sought his advice on forest change, ecology and conservation, amongst other areas. Donna's project aligns with his vision and SmartSat's mission of using space data to enhance decision making for land and sea-based environments."

Oliver Hatswell's project involves the innovative mapping of archaeological landscapes in the Australian Arid Zone using satellite remote sensing. It will undertake an extensive trial of high-resolution remote sensing and machine learning methods to map key geomorphic features and inform understanding of archaeological potential, chronology, and depositional history.

Michael Davis, Chair, Andy Thomas Space Foundation, said that Oliver's research will play an important role in cultural heritage management, working in collaboration with the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka and Wangkangurru Yarluyandi, Traditional Owners of the Simpson Desert and Coongie Lakes.

"Oliver's research may contribute to Aboriginal cultural heritage and pastoral landscape management, which the committee considered would align closely with the values of the Andy Thomas Space Foundation and SmartSat. He has a very strong archaeological background and experience, with his Supervisor, Associate Professor Ian Moffat of Flinders University, a recent recipient of the Australian Research Council Future Fellowship. Using machine learning approaches to automatically detect geomorphic features in other locations based on elevation or multispectral data has shown significant potential."

Note to editors:

About the Peter Woodgate Scholarships

The late [Dr Peter Woodgate](#) was instrumental in setting up SmartSat CRC's structure and governance framework. He was the inaugural SmartSat Chair, serving from August 2019 until his sudden unexpected passing in December 2022. Dr Woodgate was heavily involved with the space and geospatial industries for over 30 years, acting as a mentor to many leaders in Earth Observation (EO) and space technologies.

To honour Peter's significant contribution, passion, vision and tireless commitment to the advancement of these industries in Australia and around the world, SmartSat CRC and The Andy Thomas Space Foundation are offering the Dr Peter Woodgate Scholarships for Earth Observation will be awarded on an annual basis each year, commencing from 2024 – 2026.

END

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ABOUT THE SMARTSAT CRC

The SmartSat Cooperative Research Centre brings together over 100 national and international partners who have invested over \$190 million, along with \$55 million in Federal Government funding under its Cooperative Research Centres Program, in a \$245 million research effort over seven years. Working closely with the Australian Space Agency & Defence, SmartSat is making a strong contribution to the Australian Government's goal of tripling the size of the space sector to \$12 billion and creating up to 20,000 jobs by 2030. Priority industry sectors for SmartSat include telecommunications, agriculture and natural resources, and defence and national security. <https://smartsatcrc.com>

ABOUT THE ANDY THOMAS SPACE FOUNDATION

The Foundation was incorporated in July 2020 as a not-for-profit organisation with DGR Status.

The aims of the Andy Thomas Foundations' Education Fund are:

- To support space education and outreach in Australia
- To inspire young people to pursue careers in space by building a culture of entrepreneurship and igniting a curiosity for space and related scientific activities
- To improve the knowledge and develop skills of potential founders of space-related enterprises
- To improve the employability of young people in the space sector and to facilitate students and young graduates to find jobs related to their skills.

<https://andythomas.foundation/>