

Former NASA JPL leader Larry James welcomed to Monash University and SmartSat's ranks in game changing strategic appointment

Adelaide, 27 May 2024 – Monash University and [SmartSat Cooperative Research Centre \(SmartSat\)](#) have appointed Lieutenant General Larry James, former Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and a retired lieutenant general with the US Air Force, to boost their respective space research strategies.

Lt Gen James will act as Strategic Advisor to SmartSat, working alongside the world class research team to further facilitate opportunities for international collaboration, and is set to join Monash University as Professor of Space Innovation.

Lt Gen James served as Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory for 11 years, during which time he was responsible for managing the Laboratory's \$2.6 billion in annual revenues and over 6,000 strong staff working in solar system exploration, Mars, astronomy, physics, Earth science, interplanetary network programs, and all business operations.

Prior to his retirement from active duty in 2013, Lt Gen James was the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance at the Pentagon. He was responsible to the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the US Air Force for policy formulation, planning, evaluation, oversight, and leadership of Air Force intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities and led more than 20,000 Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance officers, both enlisted and civilians, across the US Air Force ISR Enterprise.

SmartSat Chief Executive Officer, Professor Andy Koronios, said Lt Gen James' breadth of knowledge and experience will be a critical asset to the team.

"Lt Gen James brings an unprecedented depth of space technology, innovation, program management and strategy development experience. As Strategic Advisor with SmartSat, his knowledge and expertise will be instrumental in developing future strategies, fostering partnerships with key stakeholders and enhancing our international space sector relationships.

"Australia is currently grappling with many challenges, be it economic, environmental or societal, many such challenges can be met with greater adoption of space technologies. We're delighted to have Lt Gen James on board to impart his experience and knowledge as we seek to address these challenges for the benefit of our nation."

Working closely with the faculties of Engineering, IT and Science, Lt Gen James' expertise will add to Monash University's defence and space research capabilities while continuing to strengthen partnerships, according to Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Senior Vice-President, Professor Mike Ryan.

"We are thrilled to welcome Lt Gen James to the University. Monash is home to the world's first Indigenous space academy – National Indigenous Space Academy (NISA) - which supports First Nations students to intern at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory - where Lt Gen James has strong links," Professor Ryan said.

“We look forward to Lt Gen James’ valuable contributions to boost our space research capabilities, and to support Indigenous Australians’ careers in space.”

Lt Gen James said he’s excited to relocate to Australia at such a pivotal time for the nation’s space industry.

“The opportunities for Australia’s space sector are huge, and I hope to share my experience and knowledge with the talented teams at both institutions. I am also keen to strengthen my connections and share expertise with Defence Space Command and the Australian Space Agency.

“At such a critical time for our sector, I am looking forward to contributing to the growth of Australia’s space capabilities and advancing the US-Australia partnership.”

Enrico Palermo, Head of Australian Space Agency, welcomed Lt Gen James’ appointment as an indication of the important role Australia plays in the international space sector.

“Space is built on international cooperation, and this appointment builds on Australia’s long-standing space partnership with the United States and NASA.

“Lieutenant General James brings a wealth of experience in daring mighty things at JPL, which will help steer and elevate the work of SmartSat CRC and Monash University – driving further growth and investment across Australia’s space industry,” said Mr Palermo.

Lt Gen James holds a Bachelor of Science in Astronautical Engineering from the US Air Force Academy and a Master of Science in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He was also a Draper Fellow at the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory in Cambridge.

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SMARTSAT CRC ENQUIRIES:

Alison Bowman

Communications and Media, SmartSat CRC
0481 273 462 alison.bowman@smartsatcrc.com

ABOUT THE SMARTSAT CRC

The SmartSat Cooperative Research Centre brings together over 135 participating organisations, including national and international partners, with more than 400 researchers. With a portfolio of over 150 R&D projects across Advanced Communication, Connectivity and IoT Technologies, Advanced Satellite Systems, Sensors and Intelligence, and Next Generation Earth Observation Data Services, SmartSat continues to contribute to building Australia’s space R&D capability. This announcement is supported by the Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources through the Cooperative Research Centres Program. Find out more at www.smartsatcrc.com.

ABOUT MONASH UNIVERSITY

For more than 60 years, Monash has used a unique mindset, entrepreneurialism, lived experience, and a diversity and equity lens to develop deep knowledge through our research and share it nationally and globally as we address the challenges of the age.

Our [Impact 2030 strategic plan](#) focuses our research towards addressing today's global challenges – tackling climate change, supporting geopolitical security and fostering thriving communities.

Our [research highlights](#) so far include pioneering IVF, producing Australia's first mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, making breakthroughs in green technology, and exploring novel approaches to solving cardiovascular problems.

We translate our research into tangible, real-world solutions and applications at the [Monash Technology Precinct](#), where collaboration between researchers, infrastructure and industry drives innovation that delivers positive impact to human lives.

Our approach to research is to work in partnership with communities and industry to create new technologies and commercialisation opportunities, to upskill the capabilities of the public and policy makers, and to help change behaviours and social patterns for the betterment of all.

With our acclaimed combination of [research infrastructure](#) and expertise, we work every day to catalyse enduring global change, and we encourage and challenge our students to be at the forefront of innovating for a better future.

Find out more: monash.edu/research