

WANT A CAREER IN SPACE?

IF YOU'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF FLYING A ROCKET AND EXPLORING THE SOLAR SYSTEM, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

KIM ELLIS HAYES IS ON TRACK TO BECOME AUSTRALIA'S FIRST FEMALE ASTRONAUT.

HEATHER GALLAGHER REPORTS.

AN ASTRONAUT IN TRAINING

In January, Kim Ellis Hayes was busy completing the flight training component of her astronaut training. If all goes according to plan, she expects to be on her first space mission by 2023.

"It's an opportunity I consider out of this world," she says. "But it has taken a lot of effort for this dream to be realised."

Kim's father died when she was 7 and her mum became her support and inspiration.

"She worked hard to provide for me and my 2 sisters," Kim says. "She taught me that I could do whatever I set my mind to as long as I was prepared to put the work in."

Kim took her mum's advice to heart, interning as a research scientist with BHP and earning 2 law degrees in addition to a science degree.

Then, after winning a scholarship for the International Space University, her career in space took off.

In 2020, in preparation for her first mission, Kim studied spaceflight physiology (what happens to the body in space), spaceflight life support, atmospheric science and spaceflight research equipment.

Now, she's focused on the practical elements using the spaceflight simulator, which allows for high-altitude training and equipment training.

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AUSTRALIA'S FIRST SPACEMAN? IT'S A HAIRY TALE!

Paul Scully-Power was a world expert in oceanography when NASA approached him to take part in their 1984 mission.

Not only did he become the first Australian in space, but he was also the first astronaut with a beard!

WANT TO KEEP YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND?

Not all careers in space require lift off.

The Australian Space Discovery Centre plans to help Australia triple its space workforce with up to 20,000 new jobs by 2030.

The space sector has jobs for lawyers, engineers, scientists, surgeons and communications specialists. There's also positions for game developers to create space simulations, and fabricators to make parts for rockets and other spacecraft.

FUTURE ASTRONAUT?

The Australian Space Agency has no current plans for a crewed space program. This means that like Kim and Paul, if you want to pursue a career as an astronaut, you might need to consider moving overseas.

Australian Space Agency spokesperson Keegan Buzza says there are no current regulations (rules) to support human spaceflight in Australia. But "that will undoubtedly change, and who knows what the private sector will do in time," he adds.

In the meantime, Kim remains passionate about encouraging young people into space careers.

"Talk about space with everyone you meet," she says. "Download an app on your phone that tracks the International Space Station, or motivate your parents or older siblings to download an app on their phone. Follow the directions for when and where in the sky you can see the bright station zoom past at 27,000 kilometres per hour!"

She also recommends reading books, watching movies and participating in space-related activities, such as the Swinburne Space Youth Innovation Challenge. In this program, students send experiments into space.

