

Media Release



Tuesday, 28 November, 2017

Another important step towards an Arnhem Space Centre

- Northern Land Council and Commonwealth Government signs off on lease of 275ha to Gumatj Corporation Limited (Gumatj) in East Arnhem Land.
- 60ha of this land is being leased to Equatorial Launch Australia (ELA) for a new commercial space centre.
- Project Facilitation Agreement signed between four organisations to deliver the project – ELA, Gumatj, Developing East Arnhem Limited (DEAL) and the NT Government.
- Global space industry growth of 9.52 per cent from 1998 to 2015 (more than three times the annual growth rate of world GDP).
- Australian space sector currently produces annual revenues of \$3-4 billion, representing only 0.8% of the global space economy.

East Arnhem Land is on track to become the home of innovative space launch technology in Australia with a new project given approval by Traditional Owners and the Northern Land Council.

Equatorial Launch Australia has been granted a 40 year sub-lease from Gumatj for a 60ha parcel of Gumatj's larger lease area, which is adjacent to the Garma site and Gulkula mine near Nhulunbuy.

ELA CEO Scott Wallis said the Canberra-based company plans to use proven launch vehicle technologies to provide access to space for commercial, research and government organisations.

"This project will provide a competitive alternative to large launch complexes, both in terms of infrastructure and associated launch costs," he said.

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“It could also support and complement recent Australian space developments and ventures in small satellite manufacturing and space environmental testing, and support increased access to the space environment and the benefits it provides to the Australian economy.”

Approval from Traditional Owners, the Northern Land Council and the Commonwealth Government for the head lease to Gumatj, which enables the sub-lease to ELA, is the first step towards launches commencing in late 2018.

“What we are doing is innovative in Australia,” Mr Wallis said. “This certainly can be done, and when successful, Australia will have the ability to launch its own home built satellites, as well as satellites for regional countries that are also in need of a ride into space.”

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders in Australia, including Traditional Owners, and internationally to ensure the viability of a spaceport in Arnhem Land.

“Gumatj, DEAL and NTG have all been instrumental in supporting this project, recognising its benefits and backing our proposal to be the first commercial space centre in Australia,” Mr Wallis said.

Gumatj CEO Klaus Helms said the partnership with ELA provided another opportunity for Gumatj to diversify its business operations and expand opportunities for local employment.

“This space centre is an opportunity for Gumatj and residents of East Arnhem Land to be at the forefront of developing a new industry for Australia, which will see long-term benefits for our region,” he said.

“Projects like this are important for showing that Aboriginal people and Aboriginal land are open for business.

“With support from the Northern Land Council, we have been able to agree a commercial arrangement that meets the needs of mainstream business, as well as those of Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal communities.

“Gumatj continues to look for new partners and industries that support our people.”

Gumatj Deputy Chairman Djawa Yunupingu added, “The Gumatj people are excited to work with ELA on this new project, on our land.”

Not-for-profit economic development organisation DEAL said the project fitted its model to expand new industries in the region with the potential to create jobs.

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“We were very pleased to introduce this project to the region and facilitate the development,” CEO Carley Scott said.

“We have been working side by side with ELA, Gumatj and the NTG for over two and a half years now. We were able to assist ELA with introductions and relationship building with the Gumatj Corporation and Northern Land Council, as well as facilitate funding and consultation efforts that have enabled this project to move forward.”

ELA was founded by trusted leaders in the Australian and the United States space industries.

“The company’s experience in developing space launch facilities is backed by the involvement of key minds in academia, science and government, and we look forward to continuing our involvement with this exciting project,” Ms Scott said.

DEAL is leading a Project Facilitation Agreement signed by all parties including ELA, Gumatj and NTG to deliver the Arnhem Space Centre.

“This agreement outlines a framework for the NTG and stakeholders to work together to facilitate development of the project and maximise its economic and community benefits,” Ms Scott said.

“Following the Chief Minister’s commitment to work with South Australia and the ACT, it is clear that the Northern Territory Government understands the importance of the growing space industry and the potential for this project to provide opportunities in the Northern Territory and East Arnhem Land.

“The project will provide training and education, support job creation, drive innovation and development of new technologies, and attract new investment to the region.

“The Northern Territory has the potential to become a focal point for space industry development within Australia, based on our competitive advantages including a geographical location close to the equator.”

ELA expects to start construction of the Arnhem Space Centre early in 2018, which would be another important step amongst the many they are diligently taking toward one of Australia’s most inspiring and collaborative development stories.

The approval of the land tenure paves the way to commence important Commonwealth and Northern Territory space and environmental approval processes over the next 12 months.