




Speech By
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**STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.15 pm): Assessing soil moisture remotely from space. Monitoring traffic flows on the Bruce Highway between Buderim and Caboolture remotely from space. Identifying PFAS contamination in a town water reservoir remotely from space. Predicting the yield of a wheat crop remotely from space. There is little doubt that the space age is going to change the way that Queenslanders interact with the world. Technological advancements will most certainly result in efficiencies and productivity gains. Many of these advancements will, however, mean that tasks that are currently performed manually will no longer be necessary. That is why I found it a little puzzling when the terms of reference for this inquiry were framed around the number of jobs that will be created rather than what capabilities could be developed. It talks to a superficiality in the conversation whereby the government feels the need to frame everything to suit its narrative of jobs, jobs, jobs. Another example is the government's decision to change the name of Defence Industries Queensland to Defence Jobs Queensland—something which will have zero effect on the outcome but which aligns with the government's carefully cultivated political narrative.

While we all want more jobs for Queenslanders, by making that the focus of a developing space industry the government has excluded consideration of all of the ways that efficiencies may reduce costs and provide a public benefit for all Queenslanders. Rather than focusing on a political narrative, the government should focus on how it can develop industry from a capability perspective and then the natural consequence will be more jobs for Queenslanders. The question is: what are Queensland's strengths and how is Queensland best placed to capitalise on the wave of space based and digital technological advancements, which are quickly evolving? Where is our competitive advantage and what will that mean for Queenslanders? What quickly became clear during the inquiry is the fact that Queensland has some world-leading experience in the earth observation area and there is considerable scope for us to leverage this experience for commercial gain and for the public good. Each of the examples that I outlined at the start of my contribution are tangible applications of earth observation techniques and technologies.

In Professor Stuart Phinn of the University of Queensland we have one of the world experts in this area. If the government is looking for tangible results, it should consider supporting the proposed earth observation CRC. Commercial application of this same technology already exists in Queensland, with Queensland based company Ozium already running a successful business. One aspect that quickly became evident was the significant role that Defence will play in the development of any space industry. It is pretty clear that the ADF is one of the main consumers of space based products currently and it is likely that that will remain the case in the future. Consequently, there is an opportunity to leverage the existing skills that reside within our serving Australian Defence Force personnel and veterans.

The committee heard that Defence personnel possess unique expertise in geographic information systems, remote sensing, image analysis and autonomous vehicles. Professor Stuart Phinn, whom I mentioned earlier, spoke about serving ADF personnel who undergo training within UQ's postgraduate program in relation to geospatial information systems and earth observation. When I questioned him about pathways for Defence personnel into Queensland government and other civilian roles, Professor Phinn said—

At the moment probably the biggest barrier is having a clear path through to industry for them.

...

We have not had any go through to state government, but they do have quite a unique set of skills ...

The committee report's recommendation 11 seeks to remediate this issue by recommending that the Queensland Space Industry Reference Group examine pathways for ex-Defence personnel to transition into employment in the Queensland space industry. That is a good first step, but words without action are meaningless. I look forward to seeing the tangible actions that have been implemented when the government's progress against all of the report's recommendations are provided to the committee in November this year.

Tremendous opportunities exist for Queensland if we get on board with the technological revolution that is happening right now. If Queensland is to make the most of this opportunity, it will require tangible support from this government to ensure that opportunities are commercialised in a timely manner. I ask the government to put aside the political narrative and do what needs to be done to grow Queensland's space industry.