

A NEW ERA OF SPACE COLLABORATION BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES

Canberra, Australia – On 18 June, 2015 in Canberra, Australia, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Geoscience Australia signed a comprehensive new partnership to maximise land remote sensing data that can help to address issues of national and international significance.

"This partnership builds on a long history of collaboration between the USGS and Geoscience Australia and creates an exciting opportunity for us to pool resources across our organisations," said Dr. Frank Kelly, USGS Space Policy Advisor and Director of the USGS Earth Resources Observation and Science Center. "We will work collaboratively to implement a shared vision for continental-scale monitoring of land surface change using time-series of Earth observations to detect change as it happens."

Dr. Chris Pigram, Geoscience Australia's Chief Executive Officer, also welcomed the agreement. "This new partnership elevates an already very strong relationship to a new level, and will see both organizations harness their respective skillsets to further unlock the deep understanding of our planet that the Landsat programme provides."

Dr. Kelly and Dr. Pigram both observed, "Our shared vision is to develop systems that enable us to monitor the Earth and detect change as it happens. The ability to do this will be critical to our ability to engage with major challenges like water security, agricultural productivity, and environmental sustainability."

A key element of the partnership involves a major upgrade to Geoscience Australia's Alice Springs satellite antenna which will see the station play a much more significant role in the international Landsat ground-station network. Following this \$3 million upgrade committed to by the Australian Government, the Alice Springs antenna will transmit command and control signals to the Landsat satellites and support downloading of satellite imagery for the broader South East-Asia and Pacific region. Alice Springs will be one of only three international collaborator ground stations worldwide playing such a vital role in the Landsat programme.

Dr. Kelly noted, "We are very pleased to see such a commitment from Australia to the future success and sustainability of the Landsat programme. We appreciate the essential role that Australia continues to play in ensuring that Landsat data for this region is collected and then made available for societal benefit."

The partnership will also include a strong focus on applying new science and 'big data' techniques, such as Geoscience Australia's Geoscience Data Cube and the USGS's land change monitoring, assessment, and projection capability, to help users unlock the full value of the data from the Landsat programme.

Dr Suzette Kimball, acting Director of the USGS, recently noted, "We are now beginning to see that the combination of high performance computing, data storage facilities, data preparation techniques, and advanced systems can materially accelerate the value of Landsat data."

Dr. Kimball added, "By lowering barriers to this technology, we can enable government, research and industry users in the United States and Australia, as well as the broader world, to realize the full benefits of this open-access and freely available data."