

STAR SARAH'S SET FOR MOON SHOOT

BRAD CROUCH

Dr Sarah Cannard reckons she was born ready to reach for the stars.

“There wasn’t a light bulb moment – ever since I can remember I had working in space as my ambition,” she said.

“It was just in my blood, then fuelling the fire I loved Star Wars, Star Trek, Stargate and the rest. I have fond memories of watching the TV shows and movies with my family and being obsessed with the possibility of what might be out there.”

[Dr Cannard’s quest for the stars sees her lead a team working on the design of Australia’s first lunar rover, Trailblazer, in partnership with the Australian Space Agency and NASA.](#)

NASA’s Artemis program to establish a long-term presence on the Moon needs a remotely controlled rover to collect lunar soil and deliver it to NASA’s processing facility on the Moon to extract oxygen.

This is a complex, critical step to support a sustainable human presence on the Moon and Mars.

Dr Cannard is a finalist in The Advertiser Sunday Mail Woman of the Year Awards for 2024, presented by SkyCity, in the Leader category supported by Jobs Statewide.

The engineer and project manager with Nova Systems grew up in Berri and Murray Bridge, then earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering, a Bachelor of Science (Physics) and a PhD from the University of Adelaide.

She is director at the SmartSat Cooperative Research Centre at Lot 14 and has been involved with complex defence, space and civil programs including the JAXA Hayabusa 1 Spacecraft re-entry, hypersonic suborbital rocket launches, Hunter-class Frigate Program and Autonomous Warrior 18.

Now based in the Barossa, in a busy and rewarding life Dr Cannard is raising three children aged 10, 8, and 6, and as a former state hockey player still loves club hockey and is a national level masters player.

She is also instrumental in forging part of the 'space bridge' between the UK and Australia, a tool to highlight and connect Australia's space supply chain as part of a framework to increase collaboration between the two countries.

She is passionate about growing a sovereign Australian industry, promoting STEM careers and creating opportunities for future generations.

Dr Cannard is a Fellow with Engineers Australia, an Amelia Earhart Fellow (Zonta International), a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, is completing her Master's in Business Administration and was the 2022 Female Space Leader of the Year.

Her advice for young women? "Follow your dreams – it may be a cliché but it is true, and another true cliché is if you do what you love you will never work a day in your life," she said.

"Whether it is girls or boys, if you like space and STEM then get involved, you don't have to be in the US with NASA or Europe with the European Space Agency, we are reaching out for the next generation to work in space industry right here in Australia.

"My dream is to help put Australia's space sector on the international stage and inspire the next generation, that really gets my heart pumping."