

Space race for Aussie astronaut

Remy Varga

Australia's race to put its first woman in space is moving towards lift-off, with Katherine Bennell-Pegg at the centre of a multimillion-dollar push that could send homegrown science soaring beyond Earth.

In a high-stakes mission now gathering momentum in Canberra, the government is weighing up whether to back the Adelaide astronaut's trip to the International Space Station.

Ms Bennell-Pegg – the 2026 Australian Of The Year and the first person to qualify as an astronaut under Australia's space program – has already been invited by the European Space Agency to join a future ISS mission

But there's a major hurdle before the countdown can begin: money.

The eye-watering cost of the mission is expected to come in at around \$100m, with hopes the bill could be covered through a mix of crowd-funding, government support and industry backing.

Some of Australia's biggest names are throwing their weight behind the campaign. Plastic surgery pioneer Professor Fiona Wood says sending Ms Bennell-Pegg into orbit would be far more than a symbolic victory – it could supercharge Australian science.

"Having an Australian put in space puts our flag in the sand and means we're part of this journey," she said.

And she already has a bold experiment in mind.

Dr Wood wants Bennell-Pegg to carry spiny mouse skin cells into space as part of cutting-edge research into healing injuries off-Earth. The spiny mouse has a remarkable ability to regrow damaged skin – a biological trick scientists hope could one day help humans avoid surgery in space.

Katherine Bennell-Pegg, who works for the Australian Space Agency in Adelaide, has been invited to join a mission to the International Space Station. Picture: Ben Clark



Sex-ed videos probed by cops

Health clinic investigated

Andrew Hough
Elizabeth Henson



Political candidate
Angela Rojas

South Australia's peak sexual health clinic has been embroiled in an unprecedented police inquiry, official documents show, after a Christian political candidate complained about sex education videos – despite not having seen them.

Shine SA, which has offices in the CBD, Woodville and Davoren Park, has supplied sexual or reproductive healthcare, education and training for more than 50 years.

But detectives this year investigated the organisation – Sexual Health Information Networking and Education SA – after a state election candidate's "vague" complaint of "unclassified" DVDs on display.

The inquiry, which Freedom of Information documents show Police Commissioner Grant Stevens was briefed on, cleared Shine SA of breaching federal and state classification laws over a small "educational" collection.

Officials stressed that while its sex education DVDs – not available for general borrowing – had explicit content such as teaching tools for intellectually disabled people entering puberty, it was not pornography.

The police inquiry distressed Shine SA staff and, after an internal review, led to videos being culled to 31. They also now show the relevant classifications.

Angela Rojas, 42, a Catholic who stood for Sarah Game's Fair Go For Australians party at this year's election, said she had acted on another mother's complaint despite not having seen the material herself.

"She told me that the DVDs had no classification ratings on

the covers, so she couldn't make an informed choice about what was age-appropriate," she said.

"There's a possibility they may be age-appropriate. I wanted to be absolutely certain."

The Elizabeth Downs mother of three denied her complaint was a political stunt or that she was a "wowser".

"There's a lot of anxious parents out there – I've done what I felt I needed to do," she said.

The FOI documents show she wrote to Attorney-General Kyam Maher on December 1 last year, complaining about Shine SA's library and resource centre displaying unclassified "sexually explicit DVDs, computer games and publications".

SAPOL papers, marked "sensitive", state she wrote to Mr Stevens after Mr Maher advised her to on December 23.

After talks with Shine SA – which temporarily removed DVDs from shelves "out of an abundance of caution" – and the Australian Classification Board, detectives in February concluded their "ongoing interest satisfied" with no action taken.

Shine SA chief executive Holley Skene said its resources gave accessible information that "supports safety, health, wellbeing and dignity".

"When people don't have access to accurate and appropriate health information, they are more vulnerable to harm, exploitation and poor health outcomes."

Seven hurt in crash

A teenager is in critical condition and six others were taken to hospital after a two-vehicle crash at Hindmarsh Valley on Sunday.

Police and emergency services were called to Victor Harbor Rd about 1.50pm after a Toyota LandCruiser and a Mitsubishi SUV collided.

A 19-year-old passenger in the Toyota was seriously injured and flown to Flinders Medical Centre. The driver, a

20-year-old Gilles Plains man, was also taken to the hospital along with his three other passengers, all with non-life-threatening injuries.

The Mitsubishi driver, a 43-year-old Hindmarsh Valley man, and his passenger were also taken to the FMC with non-life-threatening injuries.

Witness Liam Romanin said the Toyota "veered to the right, with the SUV going straight on into the LandCruiser".



Police dog Fang led officers to man with a gun. Picture: SA Police

Police dog finds gun

A handgun and drugs have allegedly been found on a man at the Adelaide Railway Station late on Saturday.

Police were conducting a Passive Alert Detection Dog Operation at the station at around 10.45pm when police dog Fang led officers to a man.

When police searched the man they allegedly found methamphetamine on him and a .22 calibre semiautomatic handgun and ammunition in

his backpack. The 48-year-old Devon Park man was arrested and charged with serious firearms offences, including possess firearm without a licence, and possess controlled drug.

He did not apply for bail and will face the Adelaide Magistrates Court on Monday.

In a separate incident in January, a 24-year-old man allegedly carrying a crossbow hidden in a suitcase was arrested at the station.