

Policy

Moon shots lost in Australia's 'adopter' strategy

Marie Johnson

Contributor
26 October 2020
[Share](#)

Like millions of kids around the world, I was completely and utterly captivated with the Apollo program. I was consumed with the excitement. I read everything. I watched everything – on black and white TV as it was back then.

Of course, Australia played an instrumental and historic role. We proudly learned about Honey Suckle Creek, Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking Station and the Parkes Observatory. It was Honey Suckle Creek that received and relayed the first television footage of Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon.

As a kid, I even wrote to Neil Armstrong asking for the log of Apollo 11, the Mission Patch and if possible, a signed photograph. After a few months I wrote again saying how disappointed I was that I didn't get a reply.

And then the reply came: to me, a young girl, one of five children in a working-class family in the western suburbs of Sydney.

A big orange NASA envelope packed full of information, booklets, photographs and memorabilia I had asked for. And a letter apologising that my first letter had not been answered. Some might say that my dogged resolve has not changed!

I vividly remember the day the postie delivered it. The large orange NASA stamped envelope didn't fit into our little aluminium letter box – the postie brought it to our front door.

And here it is. Mounted under protective glass in my office. This has travelled with me around the world.



Mighty moon shot: The Apollo mission lit up the world of innovation

When Kennedy made the "we will go to the moon" speech, the technology to achieve that mission had not been invented.

The bureaucrats cautioned him. But what was the choice? There was no technology to "adopt". Nobody had ever been to the moon before.

Breaking through the comfortable cautions of the bureaucrats, that speech and mission radically catalysed discoveries, captivating the great minds of scientists and engineers. And fed the insatiable imaginative developing minds of young people around the world.

What will inspire my grandsons to these feverish levels?

You see, the Prime Minister's constraining vision for Australia to be an "adopter" deprives my grandsons and millions of young Australians of the inspirational fuel necessary to drive their digital future. That they can be world's best at creating new things.

The biggest cost to the future – and one that we cannot afford – is to deprive our younger generation of the motivation and confidence to be, and do, and create great things. And to take on the ferocious challenges emerging. On this note, I call out the stand-out efforts of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

Far from being future focussed, my recent article '[Australia and our fractured digital future](#)', navigates an historical perspective of what is in reality a backward-looking digital repair budget. This doesn't prepare us for the future.

The very nature of the internet is morphing and the almighty battle of the platforms has only just begun.

Many believe that Facebook is no longer really managed by a collection of humans. It is a virtual organism run by algorithms.

And as robodebt has worryingly demonstrated, even the government does not have the capability to manage the impact of its own algorithms.

So back to the moon shot.

In 2011, I fulfilled a lifelong dream to be at the Kennedy Space Centre to witness the launch of the final Space Shuttle, Atlantis. It was the most exhilarating thing to see and feel: the thumping roar and vibrations go through your whole body. It expands the mind and gives cause for hope.

Space is the ultimate frontier of human centred design and interoperability. Understanding the human experience through space exploration provides insights for servicing and accessibility innovations on earth.

What will catapult us through the pandemic and for the decades ahead, is breakthrough thinking and servicing in health. This is not about [temporary telehealth](#).

Health is the biggest determinant of economic and social resilience. We need Australians to be the creators of innovative health business models, services and applications to meet the unique challenges presented by the diversity, expansiveness and harshness of Australia.

Look beyond the UK and Singapore and Estonia for digital innovations. Look to space.

How does health delivery happen in space: truly the epitome of telehealth and remote servicing.

The Prime Minister's constrained digital "adopter" approach lacks ambition and fails to tell a connected and inspiring story for generations of Australians.

That Australia's renewed space agenda must be a catalyst for driving digital innovations in one of the greatest challenges for the decades ahead: health and a healthy society.

My grandsons and their generation deserve to be inspired with boundless confidence and ambition to participate as creators in a future of untold discovery and hope.

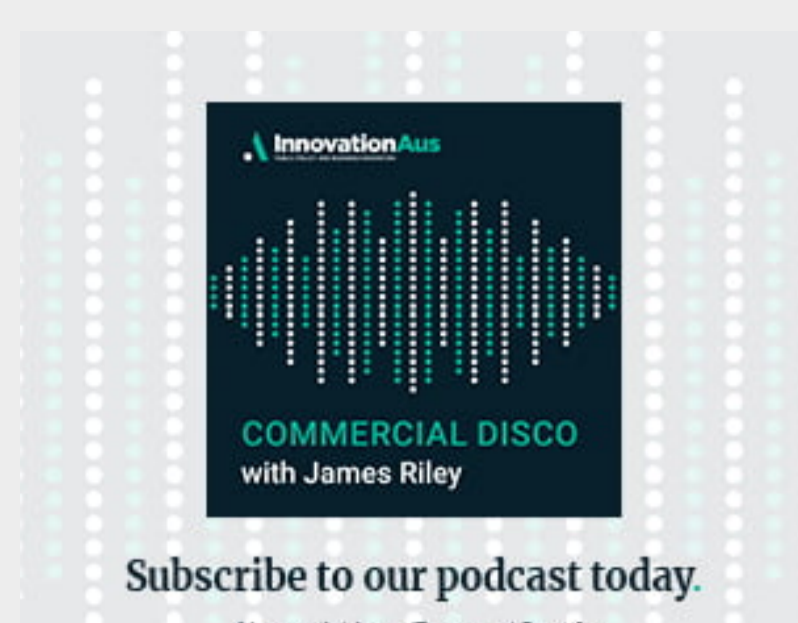
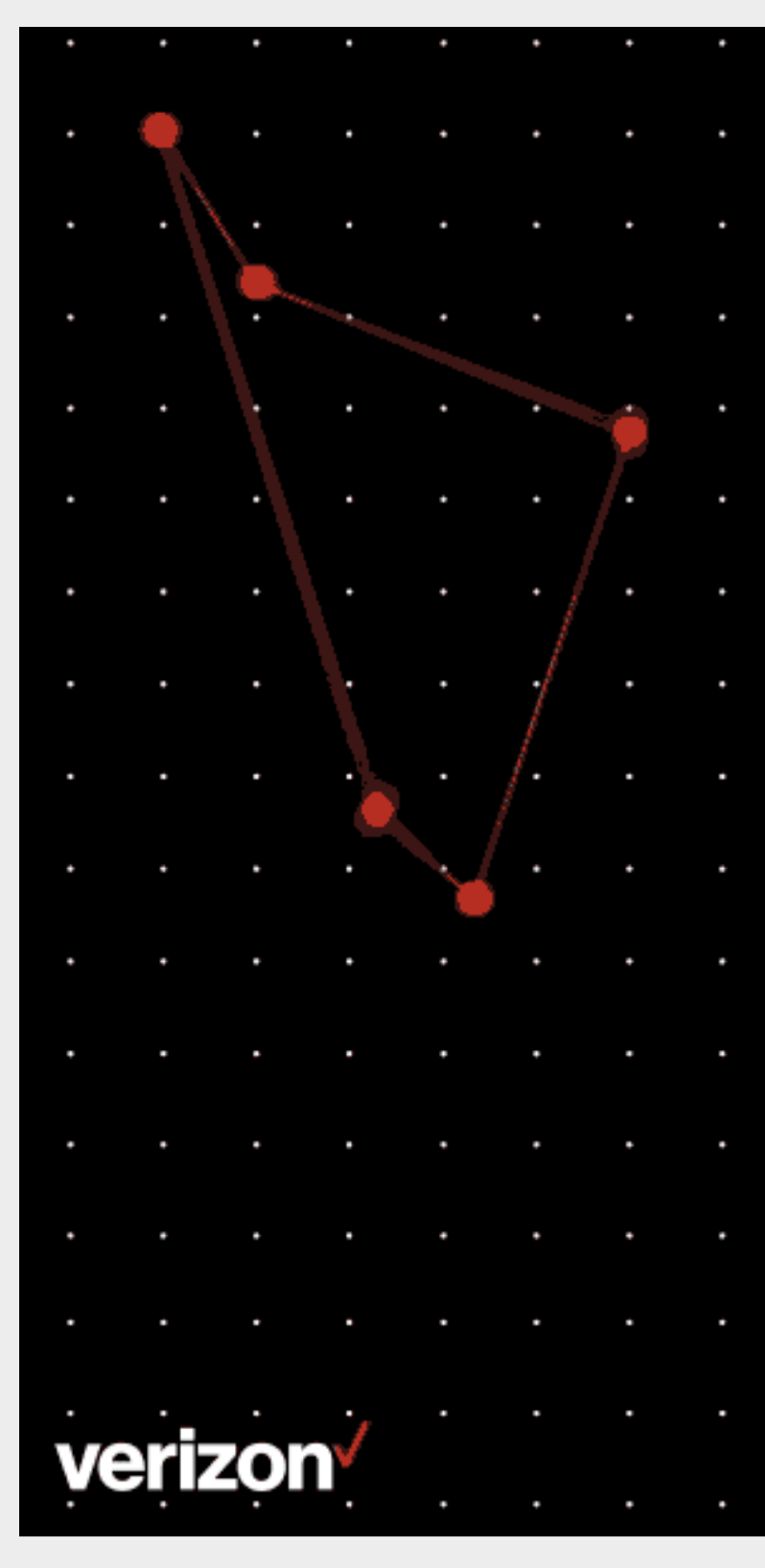
I am infuriated that what is being served to them is a vision of the future so utterly devoid of the excitement that I enjoyed at their age.

My letter to Neil Armstrong and everything that flowed from it, has stayed with me for life.

My call to action for young Australians is to write to the Prime Minister and tell him your moon shot for the future that you are creating.

Do you know more? Contact James Riley via [Email](#) or [Signal](#).

Related: [adopter strategy](#) | [Marie Johnson](#) | [moonshot](#) | [NASA](#) | [Scott Morrison](#)



Subscribe to our podcast today.
Also available on iTunes and Spotify

[← Previous post](#)

[Next post →](#)

The short timeline to a hefty 5G boost

Privacy office faces 'remarkable' drop in funding

2 COMMENTS



Belinda Lowrey
4 weeks ago

[Reply](#)

Adrian Potter, debate and difference of opinion in a democratic society is applaudable, but it is deplorable to use character assassination and personal attack as cheap and easy replacements for intelligent counter argument based on fact and evidence. I sense that you may have somehow been threatened by the writer's experience and this has clouded your judgement, but next time maybe think first before parading around a potentially identifying resume and then behaving this way on a public, professional forum, for all to see.

Your parents sound like wonderful people and thanking them publicly is nice. It must be personally satisfying to have achieved your dreams in life. However, unfortunately your privileged experience is not that of the majority and your outlook is simplistic, insular and out of touch. For many, it is not the land of opportunity. There is widespread and entrenched disadvantage, discrimination and lack of opportunity facing millions of Australians. Not every young person has loving and inspiring parents, but even those that do can face seemingly insurmountable barriers. Having someone outside of the immediate family to look up to for hope can make all the difference.

Many young people – even as young as 8 – are politically astute. Encouraging them to write to the Prime Minister is a valuable idea. The realisation that they can have their voice heard at the highest level of government is empowering and important for their sense of agency. Because even young people appreciate that it is ultimately government policies and government funding and financial investment that will enable them to live out their dreams and advance society, whether that be researching new vaccines and improving aircraft safety, or inventing and developing technologies not yet conceived.



Adrian Potter
1 month ago

[Reply](#)

Since the day I was born at Bankstown hospital in early 1970, not one politician or Prime Minister has hindered or helped me in reaching my dreams and ambitions. Certainly, none have ever been "inspirational fuel"! In fact, it was never a thought or consideration that my future success was in the hands of any of these people. As a child and young adult, I didn't even know who these people were.

My Mum and Dad were my inspiration. I worked hard, did very long and dedicated hours and was rewarded and promoted quickly.

Recently I've had the privilege of being part of a team to design, build and launch a large GEO satellite with Boeing and SpaceX at NASA Cape Canaveral. Yes, I now work in the Space industry.

Who cares what others do and say, certainly not any politicians visions or policies. Do not wait for others. Study and work hard, focus on your dreams and they can come true.

What Australian Prime Minister's vision inspirationally fueled the invention of the black box flight recorder, the Cochlear implant, Gardasil and Cervarix cancer vaccines or even WIFI?

Do not waste your time or the precious time of your children or grandchildren by telling them to write to the Prime Minister. Encourage them to study, tell them they can be whatever they want to be, dream and work hard enough to make it happen. Australian is the land of opportunity, now, just as it was in the 70s, 80s and 90s. Let's not make it the nanny state. Thank you Mum and Dad for all your help and inspiration, I love you both so much for what you did for me. I feel no need to thank Gough Whitlam, Malcom Frazer or Bob Hawke as they were not involved in my race to space.

If you are relying on any politician to inspire your children then I'm afraid you may need to take a long hard look at why you're not their inspiration.

Your email address will not be published.

Name* Email*

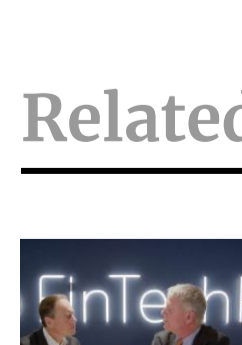
Website

Save my name, email, and website in this browser for the next time I comment.

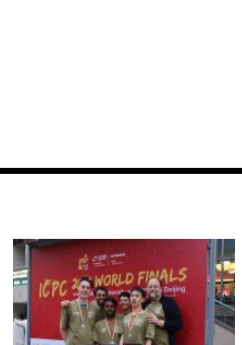
Comment*

[POST COMMENT](#)

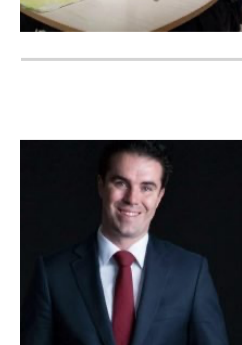
Related stories



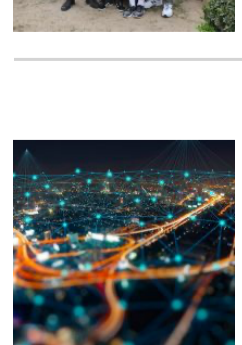
Greg Hunt rings in policy changes
21 August 2016 | by James Riley



UNSW's killer coding future
30 April 2018 | by James Riley



No 'silver bullet' for extremism: Watts
27 August 2019 | by Denham Sadler



Govt urged to ditch COVIDSafe for GApple
23 June 2020 | by Denham Sadler

Guide

- Home
- About us
- Contact Us
- Events
- InnovationAsia
- Podcast

Categories

- Policy
- Skills
- Startups
- Trade
- Research
- Science

Privacy

- Privacy Policy
- Terms & Conditions

Contact

Editorial enquiries:
James Riley
Editor
james@innovationaus.com
+61 424 300 992

Event production, speaker opportunities and sponsorship/partnership enquiries:

Corrie McLeod
Publisher
CEO Hello Espresso
corrie@innovationaus.com
+61 419 526 848

