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AVALON2009

MEDIA RELEASE

AIRSHOW GUEST OF HONOUR NAMED

Australia's own Astronaut, Dr Andy Thomas, will be the Guest of Honour at this year's Australian International Airshow and Aerospace & Defence Exposition at Avalon Airport.

The theme for Avalon 2009 is 'Towards Tomorrow' and Dr Thomas, a veteran of four space shuttle missions, will help the Airshow 'blast' into action.

2009 is the 40th Anniversary of the first manned mission to land on the moon. The Australian International Airshow will pay homage to that great event, and highlight the future directions of aeronautical and aerospace technology.

Dr Thomas says he is delighted to be involved in an international event which showcases Australia's technological and defence capabilities.

"Every country including Australia should look towards tomorrow", Dr Thomas says. "Australia has the intellectual resources and technical skills to develop a space capability to serve the national interest."

Dr Thomas hopes that Avalon 2009 will help inspire young people to look at a career with a science, mathematics, aerospace or aviation focus.

"As a child I was very interested in the early space flight programs, but, coming from Adelaide, I never considered being an astronaut a real prospect." "Don't give up on your dreams; education is pivotal in making them come true."

Adelaide born Dr Thomas became the first Australian astronaut to enter space when he made his inaugural space flight onboard the Space Shuttle, Endeavour, in 1996.

He went on to complete four space missions, a space walk, and lived on a space station for 20 weeks.

Dr Thomas will re-live those experiences when he delivers an address to hundreds of students attending a major Careers and Skills forum which is conducted in conjunction with the Airshow.

From the first small step for man, to the next giant leap in space exploration, the Australian International Airshow will be 'out of this world'.

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Avalon 2009 will be staged at Avalon Airport, Geelong from Friday March 13th to Sunday March 15th.

The Airshow is presented with major support from its principal partners- the Australian Department of Defence, the Government of Victoria and the City of Greater Geelong.

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