

Question on notice no. 47

Portfolio question number: SQ26-000066

2025-26 Additional estimates

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
Portfolio**

Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan: asked the Civil Aviation Safety Authority on 9 February 2026—

Senator CANAVAN: Finally-I should have asked this with the space stuff-what about low-Earth-orbit satellites? Do you have any role with that?

Mr Marcelja: Most of it will be about the re-entry of satellites as they come back in. We'll quite often get notified about re-entry and we'll make sure that people are aware of that in case there's debris and other things like that. Typically, we don't launch much, but we often have things come back.

Senator CANAVAN: How many have fallen on Australia in the last year?

Mr Marcelja: We'd have to get the numbers for you. They're not extraordinary numbers, but they're not insignificant numbers. My guess would be a couple a month-in that order. We could get the numbers for you.

Ms Spence: Our responsibility goes beyond just the Australian landmass. It's in the waters around as well.

Senator CANAVAN: So it's a couple a month in our territorial area?

Mr Marcelja: That's a guess.

Senator CANAVAN: Are they controlled, or are they just dropping?

Mr Marcelja: A lot of them are controlled to a point. They can control it to a certain altitude, and then, beyond that, once it starts to re-enter the atmosphere, I think they quite often don't have the control. Others, I think, don't have control at all. We get notified of where they are, as does Airservices Australia, to make sure that people are aware of it.

Ms Spence: Our biggest issue is to make sure that, if we get an indicator-there are official processes for letting us know, and, if we understand there may be space debris coming into a particular area, we again do the NOTAMs. But that doesn't mean we're monitoring what's coming in. We're just warning people that this is potentially going to be in the area and that they should proceed with caution.

CHAIR: How big are these? Is it like USS Enterprise or something?

Ms Spence: You're going well beyond my understanding of low-orbital satellites; sorry, Senator.

Mr Marcelja: They typically try to be guided out into the ocean. So most of the entry happens out in our territorial waters or in our administered airspace.

Senator CANAVAN: Presumably they've got a radius. So they can tell you, 'We're not exactly sure it will hit this coordinate, but it will be somewhere in this area.'

Ms Spence: We can certainly take on notice a way of better describing our role in this area.

Senator CANAVAN: Maybe if there are any other agencies involved, presumably with assessing these risks, you could provide those too. Thank you.