

## Japanese space probe crashes to Earth

Updated 4 hours 22 minutes ago

**Japanese scientists say they have located the space capsule Hayabusa after a helicopter search over Woomera in north-west South Australia.**

The capsule, which was launched back in 2003, successfully re-entered the earth's atmosphere overnight, creating a fireball across the desert sky.

Australia's first ever space landing ends a seven-year, five billion-kilometre journey to an ancient far-flung asteroid to collect the first ever asteroid material to be brought to Earth.

The Japanese Exploration Agency JAXA, along with teams from NASA and the Australian National University, will try to recover the capsule to see if it contains asteroid samples.

Dr Trevor Ireland from ANU was part of the team that witnessed the capsule's re-entry.

"We just had a spectacular display out over the outback skies of South Australia," he said.

"We could see the little sample return capsule separate from the main ship and lead its way in and [we] just had this magnificent display of the break up of Hayabusa.

"It was sad in one way and just tremendously exciting in other ways."

A team from JAXA, NASA and the ANU were in Woomera overnight to recover the capsule and take it back to Japan for further analysis.

A twitter post from JAXA overnight said they could confirm the position of the capsule at the Woomera Prohibited Area.

Scientists hope the samples could lead to further discoveries into how planets are formed and may shed light on the history of our solar system.

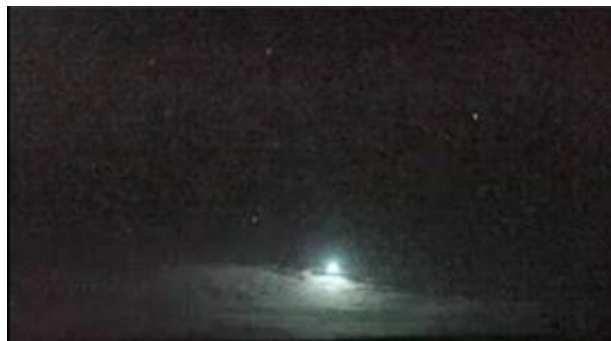
It is hoped the asteroid samples could reduce the threat of future asteroid collisions.

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*Re-entry: the Hayabusa probe crashes down to Earth. (Ustream)*

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