

# 'Satellite' hits WA

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**PERTH AAP — A 'bullet-shaped' object believed to be an unmanned Soviet Cosmos satellite has plunged to earth near Australia's hottest town, Marble Bar in western Australia's Pilbara District.**

Dozens of people, including a Royal Flying Doctor pilot, reported sighting a flare-like object cross the Western Australian coast at dusk.

Then a six-year-old boy saw the object crash somewhere near the township of Marble Bar, starting a fire in dry spinifex grass.

The remains of whatever landed have not been found yet but there's little doubt in the mind of a Perth astronomer, Mr Michael Candy.

"It could have been a meteor or an artificial satellite," he said here.

"Because it was seen for a long time we believe the second is the most likely."

He received a call from a Transport Australia official in Port Hedland, on the north-west coast, and calculated that it could have been Cosmos 434, a Soviet satellite launched in 1971.

"However, it's impossible

to say that's the one unless we can find a piece of the wrickage," he said.

"Judging by its inclination it could certainly be the one," Mr Candy said.

"It's a bit like skylab, I suppose.

"Some bits were seen to land and start a fire so I would not be at all surprised if bits are found."

Asked whether 434 could have been carrying hazardous or radioactive materials, he said, "certainly".

"The Port Hedland report was that a large chunk had fallen eight miles north of Marble Bar airport and started a fire. So I presume something is there to be found.