Spacecraft research in Canberra

CANBERRA: Scientists in Canberra are working on design of a spacecraft which will use a planet's atmosphere instead of rockets to brake and move about.

The researchers are using the world's most advanced wind tunnel to test the fuel and weight-saving "aero-capture" spacecraft.

The researchers, Dr John Baird, of the University of NSW, and Dr John Sandeman and Dr Sudi Gal, of the ANU, are based in Canberra.

Their design has been suggested for a re-useable Orbital Transfer Vehicle (OTV), which would ferry scientific equipment between the space shuttle, orbiting 240km above Earth, and satellites in orbit.

Dr Baird said the repair and maintenance of satellites would eventually be done by OTVs.

"We are in a unique position to participate in this advanced technology and it has been suggested that co-operating with the American space program at this stage could lead to significant concessions when the OTV becomes commercial," he said.

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PERTH U.F.O. RESEARCH [illegible]

Clue to riddle of space

WASHINGTON: Astronomers have discovered an intergalactic cloud of hydrogen a billion times bigger than the sun and say it could provide the answer to how galaxies are formed.

The cloud is 300,000 light-years long, several times bigger than the Milky Way, the galaxy in which the earth is located.

A light-year is the distance light travels in a year — about 9600 billion kilometres.

Astronomer Yervant Terzian said: "We have never seen anything like this before, We may be witnessing a proto-galaxy that has so far failed to form normal stars".