
UFO 'might have been meteor, junk'

By **DAVID MUSSARED,**
Science and Environment Reporter

The sparkling object spotted by many Canberra residents in the sky on Sunday night probably had been a meteor or a returning piece of space junk, the acting executive director of the Australian Space Office, Dr John Boyd, said yesterday.

Dr Boyd said the descriptions were typical of a larger-than-normal shooting star, or meteor, breaking up as it streaked through the earth's atmosphere.

It might have been a large piece of space junk returning from orbit around the earth, he said, although he knew of none that were due to re-enter the atmosphere about now.

He said meteors or space junk heated up when they entered the Earth's atmosphere about 100km above the ground, usually reaching their brightest and hottest at about 70km. The heat was caused by friction with the air.

Depending on the angle at which they entered the atmosphere, they could travel large distances — reports of sightings on Sunday night had come from as far away as Bourke and Tasmania.

It was unlikely that some of the reports

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It was unlikely that any of the material from Sunday's meteorite had reached the ground, because the meteor or space junk probably had been quite small and had burnt up in the atmosphere.

"It doesn't have to be very big to be quite spectacular — a few grams of material will make quite a spectacular show," he said. "The number that reach the ground is much smaller than the number that arrive."
