

Director's response to ATUC Report – November 2014

ATUC Recommendation	Director's Response	Traffic Light
Commendations and successes		
<p>ATUC wishes to commend ATNF on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding progress on ASKAP BETA commissioning by the ACES team; • First scientific results from BETA that are leading to publications; • Being a partner of a successful ARC LIEF grant for the Ultra-wide Band Receiver for Parkes; • Contract with NAOC to build the 19-beam receiver for FAST; • Scientific achievements of CASS staff, including the Pawsey Medal won by Dr Naomi McClure-Griffiths and the John Philip Award, won by Dr Ryan Shannon; • Excellent transition to and implementation of remote observing at Parkes; • Smooth transition of observing from ATCA to CASS headquarters. 	Noted and thanks	
Recommendations		
1. User Training and Support		
<p>ATUC suggests that the issue of training and observer qualification be separated from the issue of attracting regular scientific visitors on site to Marsfield</p> <p>1.1. Remote observer training and (re-) qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ATCA Remote Observer Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation of the proposed offer of post-observation data reduction assistance for new and inexperienced observers. ○ Guarantee of face-to-face interaction for all observers travelling to the SOC for observing. 	<p>We will separate these issues. New requirements for remote observer qualification are provided on the ATNF website http://www.atnf.csiro.au/observers/apply/ATNF-support.html (the responses to individual recommendations in this report do not provide a full description of the updated requirements).</p> <p>This is already provided and we intend to continue.</p> <p>We agree this is important, however beyond DA assistance, interactions will be limited to business hours so observers will need to plan their travel accordingly.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extension of the re-qualification period for a year following each successful new observing session (in the absence of major changes to the system). - Parkes Remote Observer Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Face-to-face orientation for first-time observers should be possible by video link from the observer’s home institution. A review of the efficiency of the face-to-face training via SOC to Parkes video link would be welcome, perhaps via the use of online documentation. - Role of the Parkes SOC support astronomer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is felt that both observers and staff would benefit from further clarification and documentation on the role of and training requirements to be the Parkes SOC support astronomer. It should also be ensured that this role adds value to visiting the SOC and provides some benefit for the support astronomer. - Requalification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We recommend extension of the re-qualification period for a year following each new successful observing session (in the absence of major changes to the system). - LBA observer training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As a matter of urgency, we request that a training model be designed and implemented to enable PIs to fulfil their support responsibilities as outlined in the call for proposals. 	<p>We do not believe once a year is sufficient given the complexity of observing: we will relax the requirement so that frequent ATCA users are only required to return to the SOC after two years have elapsed, but will retain the requirement that other users return annually.</p> <p>For now, we will continue to require first-time observers to attend the SOC for orientation and training. This is an important part of ensuring that each observer has an appropriate level of competence. We will enhance the quality of the training by providing in-person assistance with schedule preparation and the first observing session. As recommended, we will review this model after six months.</p> <p>The role of Parkes SOC support astronomer will cease. Support will be provided by the project expert or, if no project expert exists, a suitably experienced member of CASS staff.</p> <p>The requirement for Parkes observers to return to the SOC annually will be dispensed with: responsibility will lie with the PI to ensure the observers on their team are trained and competent observers. Observers are welcome at the SOC at any time and will receive training and enhanced support there upon request.</p> <p>This model has been developed and was trialled in the first LBA session in 2015. The new model does not require the “normal” remote observing qualification for stand-alone Parkes and ATCA observing.</p>	<p>Red</p> <p>Yellow</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>
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<p>1.2. Scientific Visits: Expand the current scientific visitor program to include shorter (~1-2 weeks) visits, and organise a twice-yearly data reduction school/busy week.</p> <p>1.3. Observer Support: ATUC recommends that catering options for SOC observers be offered</p>	<p>We will implement this.</p> <p>The on-line booking form has been updated as requested. Catering options will be provided with the booking confirmation. These will include facilitating evening meals from the canteen and providing frozen options to reheat in the SOC in addition to the existing self-catering kitchen in the Lodge.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>
<p>2. ASKAP</p>		
<p>ATUC welcomes the decision by the ATNF to allow for 2-3 BETA antennas to be equipped with Mk II PAFs for ASKAP-18 to optimise the performance of the array for early science projects.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	
<p>3. Parkes</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MB-20 Removal: The committee recommends conducting community consultation regarding the scientific benefits and costs of replacing the MB-20 receiver. The effect of commissioning the “Bonn-PAF” on Parkes scheduling also requires further elucidation and the timeline for any such changes needs to be made clear well in advance of proposal deadlines. - Receiver Change Policy: Increased clarity is needed concerning the Parkes receiver change policy, with information disseminated effectively to observers (e.g. via OPAL and relevant mailing lists) well in advance of proposal deadlines. We suggest keeping strong proposals for alternative Parkes receivers active for more than one semester so that they can be scheduled in one block, minimising the number of receiver changes. 	<p>The possible removal of the MB-20 receiver in 2015OCT was clearly spelt out in the Call for Proposals for 2015APR at www.atnf.csiro.au/observers/apply/avail.html. The decision of whether or not to remove the MB-20 will be based on our contractual obligations, strategic development, and user needs. We would welcome further community input via ATUC in early 2015.</p> <p>The call for proposals (link above) included a statement of the current policy: receivers other than MB-20 and 10/50 may be able to be scheduled for single dish observing if there is an exceptional science case to do so or if it is operationally convenient (e.g. if scheduled for VLBI). We will add to future calls the clarification that this is at the Director’s discretion. We intend to continue to keep Parkes proposals alive for at least one additional semester where the requested receiver is not scheduled. We have also, in consultation with the PI, moved proposals from Parkes to e.g., Tidbinbilla at 22 GHz, where this improved the likelihood of the</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>

	observation being conducted in a timely manner.	
4. Australia Telescope Compact Array		
4.1. ATCA wavelength capabilities: Retain the full observing capabilities of ATCA and if that is not possible due to funding pressures then ensure that:		
a) options are fully discussed with the community (ATUC stands ready to consult the community); and b) as much notice as possible is given of any changes to observing capability (>6 months ideally).	We agree with these principles and will consult to the extent possible.	Green
4.2. Automatic observing capabilities ATUC therefore proposes that maintaining the full capabilities of the ATCA should take precedence over any automation of ATCA observing procedures.	We agree with this principle. We intend to implement further automation only where it helps with observing efficiency and support costs.	Green
5. Long Baseline Array		
- If external funding is sought for any of the ATNF antennas, we strongly encourage the ATNF to seek a commitment to operate these as part of the LBA.	Noted; however, we do not intend to make this a requirement of funding/operating agreements	Green
- Update the community on the status of the previously-proposed ultra-wideband high frequency receiver upgrade for Parkes.	In addition to regular reports to ATUC we will also provide updates in future issues of the ATNF News and on the ATNF web pages.	Green
- We note that the effect of limited Parkes receiver changes on ongoing, partially completed monitoring projects (particularly at high frequencies) is unclear. ATUC requests clarification of the status of these reports.	Constraints on Parkes receiver changes have resulted in changes to existing programs with, e.g., some proposals requesting 2.3 GHz observations accepting a change to 1.6 GHz. The LBA session at the end of 2014OCT was made with higher frequency receivers installed at Parkes, allowing partially completed projects to be continued. An update will be given at the next ATUC meeting.	Green
- The ATNF considers the availability of Tidbinbilla when scheduling LBA observations during the year. Proposals should state explicitly whether the proposed science requires Parkes / Tidbinbilla observations.	We are exploring improved coordination of the Tidbinbilla/LBA schedules for the 2015 APR semester. Observers are asked to nominate (and expected to justify) their preferred telescopes. When these are not available, the PI is	Green

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current system in place to request observing time on Tidbinbilla as a single dish is unclear. We request that this process be made transparent for users. 	<p>consulted.</p> <p>Each Call for Proposals includes the ability to request single-dish time on a Tidbinbilla telescope using time allocated to ATNF under the Host Country agreement. As mentioned above, in a small number of cases, Parkes proposals have been reallocated to Tid if they have a sufficiently high grade and the receiver will not be available at Parkes. We request further information from ATUC if we have misunderstood this question.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>6. Governance</p>		
<p>The ATNF, AAO, Australian SKA Office and AAL have begun discussions about the governance of those bodies in the future. We were pleased that the terms of reference were distributed to the community via the ASA email exploder, and request that the community is kept regularly informed about the process.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	
<p>7. Other issues</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Ongoing software support:</i> Provide ongoing support for the livedata/gridzilla software packages. - <i>CASS Radio Astronomy School:</i> The committee strongly encourages CASS to hold this school yearly on-site at a radio telescope. The committee recognises that, in light of increased budgetary pressures and a decrease in available staff to organise the school, it may be difficult to run annually. However, we suggest that CASS could seek out a partner institute with which to co-host the school in alternating years. At the very least we strongly believe that the school should be held every two years. - <i>On-site observing experience for CASS summer students:</i> ATUC is highly supportive of continuing the on-site observing experience for CASS summer students. 	<p>Development of these packages has been frozen. Parkes users have been polled in an effort to understand how many users rely on these packages and which functionality of the packages they are using. No decision has yet been taken.</p> <p>We will hold the radio school again this year but continue to review our ability to conduct it annually. We have also decided to host intensive data reduction workshops, the first of which is in June.</p> <p>Noted. Reductions in Narrabri Lodge capacity will make this problematic for large groups; this year's summer student trip went ahead.</p>	<p>Yellow</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>

8. Issues arising from previous report		
<p>ATUC regrets the need to effectively cease all work on the CABB 16-MHz zoom mode due to budget constraints. The 16-MHz mode would be important to fill the gap that currently exists between the 1-MHz and 64-MHz zoom modes, in particular for spectral line observations.</p>	<p>Noted. Some development work on the 16 MHz mode is continuing on a voluntary basis.</p>	
9. Date and Format of the next meeting		
<p>We propose to have an ATUC science day in May/June (TBD) next year on the topic of “The Future of Australian Radio Telescopes in the ASKAP/SKA1 Era”.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	