Director's response to ATUC Report–November 2015

ATUC Recommendation	Director's Response	Traffic Light
Commendations and successes		
ATUC wishes to commend ATNF on: ● Being awarded the CSIRO Chairman's medal for ASKAP ● Progress on MkII PAFs successfully installed at ASKAP, including phase closure and the first images ● L'Oreal-UNESCO Fellowship award to Dr Shari Breen ● Arrangements with the Breakthrough Foundation, which will provide funding for 25% of Parkes operations for the next 5 years. ● Data Reduction workshop in June. This was found to be a helpful way to rapidly progress from observation to publication. ● Efforts towards updating the ATCA User's Guide. ● The successful OCE proposal to hire George Heald, thereby expanding the WA-based branch of the Astro group.	Noted and thanks	
Recommendations		
ATCA portal usability:		
1. A short guide (web page, annotated screenshot, and/or video tutorial) to using the system should also be provided so that users know what to expect.	A short guide to the Portal has been prepared. Feedback from ATUC is welcomed.	Green
2. A confirmation message or email should be sent when a Green Time booking request is made, so that observers are aware that their request has entered the system. The booking system should also be flexible enough to allow particular sections of green time blocks to be booked	The requester will be added to the email distribution when a booking request is made, ensuring they receive an email notification. Booking for part of Green Time blocks is possible. The user enters the project/CX code, plus start/end times in the tabular section of the PORTAL schedule tab. An update to the portal to make booking partial slots easier is under consideration.	Green
Collecting observer feedback:		
1. The observer feedback form be updated to remove questions that are now outdated (e.g. references to Narrabri	Feedback form now updated.	Green

accommodation, Windows Computing Facilities, etc.);		
2. That a weblink to the feedback form be placed in a prominent position on the observing portals and the observatory web pages,	We will do this.	Green
3. That the observers registered as observing each session on the portal be automatically emailed a link to the form at the conclusion of their observing run, in the same way as automatic reminders are sent 7 days beforehand to register on the portal.	We will do this (endeavouring to send only one such email per larger block of observations, rather than after each individual session within a large block).	Green
4. The current 1-10 grading system could be simplified to a 1-5 system, where 1=well below acceptable; 2 = below acceptable; 3=acceptable; 4=above acceptable; 5=well above acceptable.	Agreed – we will do this.	Green
5. A free-form "comment" box should remain part of the questionnaire.	Yes, this is often the most useful part of the feedback and will be retained.	Green
6. It may also help encourage observers to provide quality voluntary feedback if they were incentivised by placing their name in the draw for a periodic (monthly or quarterly etc) prize such as an electronic voucher (e.g. iTunes voucher), box of chocolates or CSIRO mug etc. (green time?), gamification (e.g. ATNF "points" or "star" ratings cf. eBay)	We will trial gift vouchers for the Parkes Visitor Centre on-line shop in the first instance, but are happy to review this again in the near future.	Green
Accessing observer contact information:		
ATUC recommends that a short list of the most important observing-related phone numbers be available via a link on the pink side-bar of the ATCA observing information webpage.	We have added the SOC phone numbers, and the generic ('redirect') numbers for the ATCA observer and Duty Astronomer, to the ATCA observing information page.	Green
Accessibility of observing information online:		
The committee recommends the above links to observing information be renamed so they are clearer and faster to find (e.g. replace the title "Monitoring information" with "Information for observers" or "Observing information central" and move the webpages currently under	Thank you for drawing these errors and inconsistencies to our attention – these have now been corrected. (And we now have a link to the ATNF Daily Astronomy Image from the ATNF homepage too!)	Green

the link "Observing information" to "Narrabri site information" etc.).		
ATCA User's Guide:		
ATUC recommends that the ATCA User's Guide be easily accessible from the ATNF home page. If updates are made, a summary announcement (with section numbers) needs to be made at the top of the page to make users aware of these. A short announcement should be made on the home page as well. On the Guide's webpage, put the "About this Guide" section (the most helpful section for first-time users) before the table of contents so that it is not so overwhelming. ATUC also recommends renaming that section to "Read this First" and making the text requesting feedback bold in order to encourage more feedback from users. To expedite the observation setup for new and experienced users and to supplement the observing training videos, an "Observing Setup Quick Guide" should be created to summarise the standard commands most commonly used during observing runs. This would be a summary of section 3 of the observing guide. The quick guide should be at the top of the Users Guide's webpage and be separately available as a downloadable pdf.	Thank you for the excellent suggestions regarding the Users Guide. In order to make the guide more useful for observers, we will implement all the recommended suggestions. We have some concerns about the proposed "Observing Setup Quick Guide", as there is a danger that such a guide may be preferred over Chapter 3 of the Users Guide, leading to observers not fully understanding what they are doing while setting up. We will seek feedback from ATUC on our first versions of these Guides.	Green
Feedback on ATCA observing videos:		
ATUC recommends that ATNF devote time and effort to further build a library of high-quality and time-efficient training videos. They should be advertised on the ATNF home page and be made easily accessible from the ATCA webpages, User's Guide, and Portal. ATUC also specifically requests that videos be created for DA training and for reprogramming other modes of CABB.	New training videos, including DA training and CABB reprogramming, are planned, and will be widely advertised when available.	Green
ATNF Radio School:		
ATUC strongly encourages ATNF to continue holding radio astronomy schools into the future. The	The ATNF is indeed committed to holding and hosting the Radio School every 2 years.	Green

committee suggests ATNF may consider seeking direct feedback from Australian students (e.g through university mailing lists) to determine numbers in support of different models of running the school (annually held at telescope site; bi-annually held at telescope site; yearly held in partnership with an external organisation; alternating between single dish and synthesis imaging). We strongly encourage ATNF to hold this valuable event at least every 2 years so all students have the opportunity to attend at least once. ATUC also recommends that the announcement of the school location and date be made early in the year to ensure students can 'save the date'.	We will seek the feedback you suggest on how best to run these. Note that we will have a data reduction workshop in May this year.	
Useful events:		
The committee is in strong support of ATNF running events such as those listed above for the benefit of the astronomy community. ATNF might consider hosting these events in distributed locations (i.e. locations other than Sydney). As well as reducing travel time and costs for many ATNF users, this could facilitate expanding the user base outside of ATNF and the traditional radio astronomy community, which would be a positive development, and could help in securing additional community support for continued operations funding of the full suite of ATNF facilities. The committee recognizes that alternative locations could increase the cost of organizing such events and suggests that a partner host (such as a University) could help to minimise the increased expense.	We would be keen to hear from organisations willing to volunteer to host such an event. Responses to our request for hosts in 2015 were limited but we will continue to pursue this. Indeed the costs are a crucial part of this equation. We note that several ASKAP Community workshops are being held in the first half of 2016, with the first at Sydney Uni. and the second in Perth.	Green
ATCA Legacy Projects:		
1. *Archiving Legacy Project data products:* ATUC strongly urges ATNF/CSIRO to commit to the long-term archival storage of fully-processed Legacy Project data products.	A proposal wi ll shortly be submitted to extend the CASDA (CSIRO ASKAP Science Data Archive) to Stage-II, which includes support for Legacy Project data products. Some community discussions have already taken place on this and further input will be sought.	Yellow
2. *CSIRO involvement with Legacy projects:* ATUC recommends that	CASS will maintain a high level of engagement during the establishment of the Legacy Projects and ensure they	Green

CSIRO/ATNF maintain a high level of CSIRO staff engagement with ATCA Legacy programs at all levels. In particular, it is important to make sure that some fraction of CSIRO staff time is specifically assigned to assist with residency	remain well supported throughout, including support for residency programs.	
programs if they are to be successful and productive. ATUC supports the ATNF suggestion that CSIRO staff be included in Legacy program proposals wherever possible.		
3. *Logistics of Legacy projects:* ATNF should clarify their policy regarding the provision of both data storage and processing capabilities for Legacy teams prior to the official Call for Legacy Proposals.	All ATNF observers should have a UNIX account which gives them access to the ATNF's computing systems. These are expressly provided for processing of Facility data; Legacy Project teams would be welcome to use them. We have a well-used system for allocating diskspace that can be used by a project group over periods of years. ATNF welcomes input from Legacy Project teams regarding the data storage, CPU and memory requirements they expect their projects to have, to assist with forward planning of new equipment purchases.	Green
4. *Impact of Legacy projects* ATUC recommends that the distribution of telescope time between small/medium/large projects and between science areas be monitored closely during the start of Legacy programs, and that both the time allocation and scientific outcomes are reviewed regularly. ATUC requests that ATNF reports back on this to the community, particularly during the first 2-3 semesters that Legacy programs are running.	This balance between proposals will be monitored and reviewed and reports provided to ATUC.	Green
ASKAP tied array mode		
ATUC recommends that the ASKAP tied array mode should remain a high priority for the ATNF, and that options should be sought to avoid losing this capability; options may include collaboration with external partners and competition for external funding (e.g. ARC LIEF). ATUC requests extensive community consultation, opportunity for community contribution/collaboration, and regular updates on the status of this capability.	An internal review of the ASKAP tied-array mode was commissioned in November 2016 and has concluded that the implementation of this mode will require significantly larger effort and cost than originally planned, likely putting it outside the scope of the existing construction project. ASKAP Science Survey Teams (SSTs) were consulted to identify or restate their requirements for a Tied Array Processing system. Tied Array Processing remains a high priority for CASS. The design,	Yellow

	development and implementation of Tied Array Processing will be scheduled based on availability of resources, and collaboration options are starting to be discussed. We will consult with ATUC on the priority of this compared with other development projects.	
NAPA override policy in rapid response mode		
ATUC would be happy for ATNF to reconsider their override policy for rapid response events, but urges ATNF to make any new policy very clear before implementation, to avert complaints from displaced users.	Any change in policy will be widely advertised and introduced only after its implementation has been carefully considered.	Green
Long Baseline Array		
1. ATNF should continue to support the LBA as a national facility, including operation of Parkes, ATCA and in the future ASKAP in tied-array mode, and correlation. ATUC also requests that the status of Mopra as part of the LBA be publicised as soon as any agreement is reached.	CASS's commitment to the continuation of the LBA is indicated by its decision to bring correlation of LBA data back "in house" and the recruitment of a staff member to handle this task. A UNSW-led consortium will be operating Mopra for the 12 months from mid-March 2016 and covering all costs associated with the maintenance and upkeep of the facility. The consortium recognizes the importance of Mopra to the LBA and it is anticipated that Mopra will generally be available to participate in LBA observations.	Green
2. An upgrade path to wider observing bandwidth with the LBA should continue to be considered.	Wider observing bandwidths for the LBA continue to be under consideration, within existing resourcing constraints, however the heterogeneous nature of the network presents some technical challenges.	Yellow
New ATCA observing modes:		
ATUC encourages ATNF to continue trials of unattended observing, with a view to making this the default mode from the start of 2016OCTS. Further investigation of implementing queue-scheduled and rapid response observing with ATCA is warranted (together with regular monitoring of B1934-638 to avoid every program from having to observe it themselves), and plans for implementing these presented at the next ATUC meeting.	We will provide an update at the next ATUC meeting. We anticipate being able to make unattended observing available to all observers on a shared-risk basis, and subject (at least initially) to a good weather forecast.	Green
ATCA remote observing requalification		
ATUC is happy with the existing	While all three models proposed have	Yellow

*requirement that **new** users must visit the SOC for observer training. However, for all other users ATUC strongly recommends that ATNF adopt one or more of the following models:* ● *A Parkes-type model in which "project experts" approved by ATNF are permitted to train or retrain observers on their teams for remote observing.* ● *Indefinite rolling extensions to the requalification period for experienced users who have been regularly observing remotely, with the definition of "experienced" and "regularly" to be defined as ATNF see fit.* ● *Remote retraining via videocon with Robin/Jamie combined with online tutorials to replace the requirement that repeat observers visit the SOC in person.* In all cases the policy needs to be well publicised with formal channels in place for implementation, until such a time as queued observing is rolled out.	attractive features,our concern is that these are not guaranteed to result in well-qualified observers… but we concede our current system does not guarantee that either! The first model has the advantage of providing good project-specific training, and we could consider it, if the observer is required to call the project expert first for assistance, rather than the DA. We already allow the period between visits to be extended (by six months) for regular observers, and can consider tweaking this system further, by making this a rolling six-month extension. As noted above, we will provide more on-line tutorials, which we agree can be very useful tools for diligent observers, however it is not clear they can be relied on in all cases. We agree any changes need to be well publicized and we are happy to discuss further the details of the above changes at the next ATUC meeting, with a view to making a clearly defined and well promulgated policy.	
Facilitating inter-site synergy: Marsfield, Narrabri, Parkes, Perth, Boolardy, Geraldton		
ATUC requests that ATNF provide official specification of the possibility/scope for visits to the various telescope/operation sites: Narrabri, Parkes, Perth, Boolardy, Geraldton for both CSIRO staff/students/postdocs and non-CSIRO members of the community.	A detailed reply will be provided to ATUC in advance of the next meeting. Briefly, requests to visit all sites other than Boolardy are welcomed and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. We note that staff and observers have recently made visits to Narrabri and that Parkes hosted a student school last year. The Lodge at Narrabri remains open for visitors, but first-time observers are required to visit the SOC for their observations as that is where the Duty Astronomer and other support staff are based. Boolardy is the one site where visits are actively discouraged as it is in a radio-quiet zone; the overheads in accommodating visitors are high; and staff efforts are focused on progress towards a fully functioning telescope.	Green
Date and Format of the next meeting		
TBC		