

Director's response to ATUC Report – November 2016

ATUC Recommendation	Director's Response	Traffic Light
Commendations and successes		
<p>The ATUC congratulates Douglas Bock on his appointment as CASS Director, and looks forward to working closely with him over the coming years. ATUC would also like to commend CASS on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The commencement of the Early Science operations with ASKAP-12 - The rate of progress on ASKAP construction, with 28 PAFs now on site - The commencement of Breakthrough Listen observations at Parkes - The successful installation of the PAF on Parkes, and subsequent observations - Achieving the first PAF-PAF fringes between Parkes and ASKAP - PAF contract with Jodrell Bank - The Eureka Prize awarded to Lisa Harvey-Smith 	CASS thanks ATUC for these commendations.	
Recommendations		
2. Budgetary constraints		
<p>CASS should continue to pursue all possible avenues for revenue generation, including but not limited to the sale of telescope time to interested parties.</p> <p>That the EoI process for purchasing Parkes/ATCA time is widely advertised in the community.</p>	<p>CASS continues to pursue additional revenue from several streams including, but not limited to, sale of telescope time.</p> <p>The announcement of opportunity on the ATNF website was followed-up with targeted phone and personal contacts. A dozen or so inquiries have been received and we are following up. A progress report will be provided to ATUC at the next meeting</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>
3. Risks entailed from the loss of National Facility telescopes		
No recommendations	Input noted	
4. ATCA		
<p>CASS should work to ensure that their policies do not adversely impact the diversity of ATCA science and the breadth of the ATCA user community.</p> <p>Should there be any changes required to the availability of the facility, the user community should be advised as soon as reasonably possible.</p>	<p>CASS concurs that while continuing to support the best ATCA science it is equally important to maintain the diversity of the science and breadth of the user community.</p> <p>Whilst every effort is being made to identify additional operational funding, we remain committed to communicating any necessary changes to the availability of the national facility at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>

<p>4.1 <u>Observing issues</u> CASS should clarify the current policy for unattended observing with the ATCA, and plans to expand this mode.</p>	<p><u>4.1 Observing issues</u> The aim of the unattended observing development project on the ATCA is that observers will not need to be constantly visually monitoring their observations. Instead, an alert (currently on twitter) will notify them of any serious issue with data quality that may require their intervention. Other means of notification than twitter may also be considered.</p> <p>Once fully unattended observing is in place the observer will not need to monitor the array except while setting up and at the end of their run when they hand over or stow the array.</p> <p>The automation already in place is sophisticated enough to keep the telescope safe either autonomously or by alerting appropriate ATNF science operations staff. However data quality remains an issue as the automation is not sophisticated enough to catch every subtle problem that could occur, particularly in zoom modes. Further development in this regard is ongoing.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>4.2 <u>Automated override functionality</u> ATUC recommends informing the user community as an automated override functionality for the ATCA becomes available. We recommend developing a policy regarding different scenarios for overriding scheduled observations.</p>	<p><u>4.2 Automated override functionality</u> A fully automatic override system is now in place on the ATCA, allowing registered NAPA proposers to trigger a NAPA observation automatically through an interactive web service. Two NAPA projects have registered to date. The new capability has prompted a revision of the policy for overrides which CASS will put to the AT Steering Committee in May for endorsement.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>4.3 <u>Duty Astronomers</u> CASS should look into possible models for updating or replacing the current DA system to reduce the workload on staff, and to ensure a minimum level of skills for remote observers.</p>	<p><u>4.3 Duty Astronomers</u> CASS agrees that the current DA system needs reviewing and we will present some options for discussion at the next ATUC meeting. One option is the replacement of the DA role, at least for some projects, by a nominated “project expert” from the observing team, as is the practice for Parkes and the LBA.</p> <p>CASS welcomes other suggestions to raise and/or measure improve and test observer skill levels. We recognize that our observers need to be trained not only to operate the telescope, but also to understand the system sufficiently well to identify when the telescope is not working correctly. We consider the ATCA Users Guide to be the reference manual for observing, and we encourage all</p>	<p>Amber</p>

<p>4.4 <u>Staffing</u> No recommendations</p> <p>4.5 <u>Education</u> Hosting a radio school every two years would be sufficient to train up new generations of students, and CASS should continue to explore the possibility of partnering with other institutions.</p>	<p>users to read it and provide us with comments or suggestions for it. Other online training tools are desirable and we have in the recent past explored training videos but the effort required to make these to a level useful for new observers is significant and our support staff are struggling to find the time to continue making these. This effort might better be spent in developing a mandatory online competency test for new users, and to maintain the existing emphasis on face-to-face training which CASS believes is a cost-effective instrument.</p> <p>Looking further ahead CASS is exploring the option of implementing a “chatbot” linked to the observer portal to provide automated expert assistance to observers, capturing the knowledge of our system experts, but we do not currently have a good estimate of when this might be available.</p> <p><u>4.5 Education</u> CASS intends to continue hosting radio schools at the ATCA every two years (including 2017) and is actively exploring the possibility of partnering with other institutions including ICRAR to hold schools in Perth in the intervening years, perhaps with more of a focus on wide-field radio astronomy, big data and e-research.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>5. ASKAP No recommendations</p>		
<p>6. LBA ATUC encourages CASS to make every effort to maintain Australian VLBI capability and keep the LBA operational.</p>	<p>CASS understands the value of high-resolution radio astronomy to Australia and we will continue efforts to seek operational funding that will enable us to maintain our suite of national facility telescopes, including the LBA.</p>	
<p>7. TAC & Scheduling process ATUC would like to see the PI notifications and telescope schedules released at least 6 weeks, and preferably 2 months prior to the start of each semester.</p>	<p>The current timing of the ATNF deadlines and the TAC meetings leaves little time between grading proposals and releasing schedules. Extending the current minimum period of four weeks’ advance notice to PIs could be achieved only by advancing the proposal deadlines and review process by 2-4 weeks. CASS is happy to discuss such a change but we wonder why a longer period is needed</p>	<p>Amber</p>

<p>ATNF should give consideration to including a weather allowance in millimetre allocations.</p>	<p>now that most observing is now done remotely.</p> <p>The TAC is currently allowing 30~50% contingency time to millimetre proposals requesting it. CASS is happy to discuss this if some PIs feel this scheme is not working, or if the issue is more about make-up time on a different date.</p>	<p>Amber</p>
<p>8. Instrumentation Upgrades</p>		
<p>No recommendations</p>	<p>Input noted</p>	
<p>9. SKA regional centres</p>		
<p>No recommendations</p>	<p>Input noted</p>	
<p>10. ATNF roadshow</p>		
<p>CASS should continue to provide future updates to the community, with sufficient notice and opportunity for all relevant members to attend/receive the update and provide feedback. The role that CASS expects the community to play in decision-making should be clear.</p>	<p>ATUC remains the primary mechanism for the user community to provide input into decision-making, and we encourage ATUC to advise on how this is working and whether we can provide more effective support for the mechanism. CASS is committed to fully bi-directional communication with the Australian astronomical community and will continue to seek additional regular engagement through the usual events such as scientific conferences and Town Hall meetings. Substantial ATNF roadshows have taken place only every few years, often around major items warranting the broadest possible consultation. We appreciate the ATUC feedback on the previous Roadshow, and are considering more regular roadshows. We commit to improving timing with respect to relevant meetings, as well as lead-time as part of improving the feedback mechanism. We will also aim to improve institutional coverage on the basis of the ATUC recommendation, although we do note that presentations could only be delivered at institutions (the majority) that were able to host us during the period over which the Roadshow was taking place.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>11. CASS workplace culture</p>		
<p>CASS should continue to improve its anti-bullying and harassment processes for staff, visitors and students. This should continue to be communicated to the community. Special consideration should be take around procedures for students.</p>	<p>CASS has initiated a project to explore improving its culture and processes with respect to bullying and harassment. The project team led by Michelle Storey (michelle.storey@csiro.au) includes Sarah Brough, Lisa Harvey-Smith, Sarah Pearce and Ryan Shannon. The team is examining culture, training, and the CASS work environment. The project delivered its initial report and recommendations to the CASS executive</p>	<p>Amber</p>

	<p>in early March. David Williams (Executive Director of CSIRO National Facilities and Collections) met with the heads of the Australian astrophysics group in April to communicate actions to the community. We will report to ATUC at the next meeting</p> <p>Independently of this project, the CASS diversity committee continues to meet regularly to discuss a broad range of matters related to equity and inclusion. The committee makes recommendations to the CASS executive and monitors action taken. The committee has identified improving CASS culture as one of its highest priority actions for 2017.</p>	
12. Outreach		
CASS should make it easier for users to find out who[m] to contact about issuing press releases based on use of CASS facilities.	The exploder cass-enquiries@csiro.au has been created for this purpose and appropriate references added to the ATNF website (under "outreach" and "contact us").	Green
13. Feedback from last report		
<p>13.1 <u>Site visits/collaboration</u> As suggested in the last response, CASS will develop a clear plan for offering annual short site visits to MRO for interested members of the community.</p> <p>Webpages to be updated to list current logistical information about visiting/observing from other sites.</p> <p>13.2 <u>Staff contact list</u> ATUC was disappointed to see that CASS staff contact details are still not available on the Staff List web page, and expects to see this resolved well before the next ATUC meeting.</p> <p>13.3 <u>Timing of releasing the Director's response to the ATUC report</u> ATUC would appreciate receiving the director's response to the ATUC report well in advance of the ATUC meeting (a month or two at least) to enable discussions where needed.</p>	<p>A clarification of policy and arrangements for visits to the MRO will be presented at the next ATUC meeting.</p> <p>Relevant details are now provided on the ATNF Website, on the top-level observing pages for the ATCA and Parkes.</p> <p>Our apologies for the delay. This long-standing omission has now been rectified.</p> <p>We aim to provide our response within 4 weeks of receiving ATUC's report. Organisational changes have delayed this report but we will strive to meet this timeline in future.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Amber</p>