

Summary of the National Committee for Astronomy Meeting: 6 December 2004.

NCA Home Page: <http://www.atnf.csiro.au/nca>

Current Membership: Brian Boyle (Chair), Matthew Bailes (Vice-Chair), Penny Sackett, Warwick Couch, Mike Dopita, Andrew Melatos, Anne Green, Matthew Colless.

Matthew Bailes. NCA Vice-chair.
17 January 2005.

The final NCA meeting for the year was held in Canberra at the Academy on Dec 6 2004. As part of a response to community input, the NCA has decided to produce a summary of each meeting to keep the community it represents informed of important decisions and to make the NCA processes more open and transparent. This is the first such summary and the aim of the NCA is to circulate this summary within a couple of weeks of any meeting. This supplements the circulation of the NCA agenda to the community prior to the meeting.

New members this year included Mike Dopita, Andrew Melatos, Warwick Couch and Matthew Bailes, with Brian Boyle assuming the role of chair. Brian expressed the desire to have a Vice chair, and the members of the committee elected Matthew Bailes to the post to help reduce his load. Some discussion of whether the Vice-chair should be the “chair-elect” was made, but it was decided that this was not appropriate.

Some discussion of NCA membership took place. It was agreed that the process to nominate new members should seek the guidance of the Heads of Departments meeting which takes place at the ASA every year prior to the formation of any sub-committee, and that the process should be as transparent as possible to reinforce community confidence in the NCA.

The NCA noted the efforts to develop Australia's involvement in an ELT and in Antarctic astronomy, and recognized that, while there are significant joint opportunities, the two programs are not dependent on each other.

The NCA spent some time discussing the ELT working group's proposal to ask for government support for Australia to seek membership of the Giant Magellan Telescope, which would provide a clear path to Australia's continued involvement in forefront optical science. The NCA recognised the limited opportunities for ELTs, and agreed that whilst it was unfortunate that the decadal process was not complete, the GMT project was worth pursuing with government given the ELTWG's enthusiastic support and that of the community at recent meetings.

The NCA is seeking ARC support for the decadal review process, and spent some time reviewing the progress of all the working groups. Groups that had not met the initial deadline were refreshingly few, and those that had not were to be contacted by Brian Boyle. Within a few days of the meeting, all reports were submitted. The editorial board for the Decadal review was discussed, with people possessing excellent writing skills

identified as potential writers for the final report. Subsequently, Charles Jenkins, Elaine Sadler, Chris Tinney and John Storey have generously agreed to help write the report. The NCA is grateful for their willingness to serve the community in this way.

Brian Boyle volunteered to “go walkabout” during the Decadal review process, making sure to visit all departments, especially the smaller ones to ensure their input into the decadal review. The NCA is very aware of the pressure on many of the smaller physics departments across the country. The NCA recognised the need for the next decadal review to be presented in the best possible light, by using professional graphic artists and consultants.