



Australian SKA Planning Office

Newsletter 1, August 2005

This is the first of a series of Newsletters to keep interested parties informed about the progress of activities in Australia related to the Square Kilometre Array radio telescope. Further information on the SKA project can be found on the international SKA website at www.skatelescope.org.



Image: Chris Fluke, Centre for Astrophysics and Supercomputing, Swinburne University / CVA

Formation of Australian SKA Planning Office

As the SKA project gains momentum in Australia, the Australian SKA Planning Office (ASPO) has been formed within CSIRO ATNF to implement the policy of the Australasian SKA Consortium and to manage the coordination of SKA activity within Australia. Contact people for the different spheres of activity within ASPO are listed below.

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Australian industry group endorses SKA Cluster Mapping Project

A project to determine Australian industry's capabilities towards the SKA has been endorsed by the Australian Electronics Industry Action Agenda Implementation Group at its June 2005 meeting. Action Agendas are Australian Government-Industry partnership initiatives to realize opportunities of international markets and new technologies. Through contact with the Australian Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association (AEEMA) ASPO identified the Electronics Industry Action Agenda as being most relevant to the SKA project. AEEMA is the peak body representing Australia's information and communication technology (ICT), electronics and electrical manufacturing industries. With AEEMA's support, a project to map industry capability for

the SKA has been endorsed by the Electronic Industry Action Agenda Implementation Group. The follow-up activities will include regular briefings to Minister McFarlane, DITR, on progress. As a result ASPO, in partnership with AEEMA, is initiating the 'SKA cluster mapping project'. This project will initiate a network of Australian companies with expertise in SKA electronics technologies, including a database of contacts and capabilities, foster R&D of critical SKA technologies with industry, as well as exploring commercial applications of SKA R&D.

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WA State funding for radio astronomy in the Mid West

The Western Australian State Government announced at the end of May that it has allocated \$4M in further support for the radio astronomy projects at the Australian candidate SKA site. The money, earmarked in the State Budget for 2005/06, will fund infrastructure for radio astronomy projects at Mileura. These include ATNF's 20-dish extended New Technology Demonstrator radio telescope, and the Low Frequency Demonstrator project being led by MIT Haystack Observatory in the US.

CSIRO, the ATNF's host organisation, has already committed \$15M over three years for developing the NTD technology into the extended New Technology Demonstrator telescope (xNTD).

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Science meetings

On 6 April the ATNF held a one-day meeting to canvass the science possible with the 'extended New Technology Demonstrator'—the second phase of the NTD project. The current specifications for the xNTD are for 20 dishes,

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each of 15-m diameter and with a focal-plane array consisting of 100 elements operating over a frequency range of 800-1700 MHz, yielding a field-of-view on the sky of about 40 square degrees at 1.4 GHz.

On 7 June the ATNF hosted a symposium to review science and technology results arising from Major National Research Facilities funding granted by the Australian Government in 2001. About half of this funding has been directed to SKA technology development. The meeting reviewed progress in SKA simulations, RFI testing of the Mileura site in Western Australia, the SKA Molonglo Prototype (SKAMP) project, configurations for the Australian SKA site bid, and development of the Compact Array Broadband Backend, MMICs (monolithic microwave integrated circuits), and focal-plane arrays.

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***If you would like to become a member of the Australian SKA email group to receive information about SKA activities and events, please contact Dr Michelle Storey
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