

Australia Telescope Users Committee

Report to the Director on the meeting held at the Australia Telescope National Facility, Epping NSW on Friday December 6 1996.

The AT Users Committee meeting commenced at 0845 and ended at 1530. Members present were Professor P M McCulloch (chair), Dr L Allen, Dr R Clay, B Gaensler, Dr A Green, Dr C Heisler, Dr S Johnston, Dr K Jones, Dr P Jones, Dr N Killeen, Dr M Mazzolini, Dr R P Norris, Dr J Reynolds (secretary), Dr S Ryder, Dr E Sadler, Dr M Wieringa, Dr P Wood, Dr A Wright.

Apologies were received from Dr J Bland-Hawthorn, Dr M Drinkwater, Professor K Freeman.

The Chairman paid tribute to the late Dr Bobbie Vaile, noting her valuable contribution to ATUC throughout her many years of tenure.

After preliminary discussions the meeting was open to any interested users from 0900.

The Chairman welcomed new members Dr L Allen, B Gaensler, Dr P Jones and Dr M Wieringa and thanked retiring members Dr R Clay, Professor K Freeman, Dr R Norris and Dr P Wood for their contributions over many years.

Matters arising from the Director's comments on the previous ATUC report.

- 1 ATUC stresses the value of remote observing and requests clarification of its status and the role of the duty astronomer in the event of a link failure. Is there any mechanism to alert the DA to a link failure?
- 2 ATUC notes that the CA archive is working well and would like to see an index of observations made at Parkes with similar aims to that of the CA database.
- 3 ATUC recommends that we move towards establishing a data archive for Parkes.

Business matters:

- 4 ATUC endorses the TAC policy for the release of data from major projects after 12 months.
- 5 ATUC endorses the revised TAC policy to afford some protection to approved PhD research programmes but requests that steps be taken to ensure that students are making satisfactory progress before they obtain additional observing time.
- 6 ATUC requests that current students be offered a similar level of protection to that proposed in the new student policy.
- 7 ATUC suggests that applications for observing time should distinguish between requests which form part of a PhD project and those which merely involve PhD students.

- 8 ATUC requests clarification as to what constitutes a long term proposal, and how the 18 month propriety period on data is to apply to these projects.
- 9 ATUC endorses the concept of a user instrumentation policy but requests that it should be extended to apply to software as well as hardware.
- 10 ATUC recommends that the builders of special software and hardware who have had significant support from the ATNF should have sole access to this equipment for one clear observing term after it has been commissioned. After this time interval the equipment should be made available for general use. To facilitate general access to this equipment the developers should be required to co-operate with ATNF staff in the provision of appropriate documentation.
- 11 ATUC recommends that the interval between the closing date for observing proposals and the start of the next observing term should be extended by two weeks. ATUC's preferred option was that the closing dates for proposals be on the 15th October, February and June for term commencement on 1st January, May and September.
- 12 ATUC requests clarification as to why a further round of proposals has been sought for Parkes for February 1997 when the original observing term was apparently oversubscribed.
- 13 ATUC is concerned at suggestions that some receiver systems may not be available on Parkes during the Galileo project and recommends that the ATNF should adhere to its policy of scheduling the best science.
- 14 ATUC supports the efforts of those involved in spectrum management to negotiate an acceptable agreement with the cloud radar project at 94GHz so as to minimise its impact on mm-wave observations. We suggest that these negotiations be made in close cooperation with other observatories.
- 15 ATUC recommends that the Mopra 22 GHz receiver be given a priority ranking of 1 in the ATNF development program.
- 16 ATUC requests that an effort be made to remove known bugs from the Mopra spectral line software.
- 17 ATUC endorses the proposed project scientists for the MNRF projects.
- 18 ATUC is concerned at delays in the signing of the MNRF agreement.
- 19 ATUC recognises the importance of Hydrogen masers at all observing sites for the space VLBI program and recommends that the suitability of the Russian masers be investigated as a matter of priority so that orders can be placed as soon as the MNRF agreement is signed.
- 20 ATUC is concerned that the call for International Research Facility proposals has not been as widely circulated as we would like. Several committee members were not aware of it till this meeting.

We suggest that the proposal deadline be extended and that the wording of the document be clarified as to whether these funds can be used for individual travel to conference.

- 21 ATUC supports the ATNF negotiations concerning involvement with SEST and encourages all forms of collaboration. ATUC believes this collaboration should take the form of technical support and the development of equipment and software.
- 22 ATUC thanks Jim Caswell for his proposal for a North-South spur for the CA and endorses the concept and encourages further investigation of the best configuration for this extension. ATUC believes this development would be a very valuable addition to the compact array.
- 23 ATUC requests that the ATNF reconsider and/or clarify its new Duty Astronomer requirements as applied to non-ATNF personnel in the light of concerns from non-ATNF members. ATUC requests that the Director discuss the matter with the chairman of the User Committee.
- 24 ATUC is concerned that new users of the CA can fall into traps such as placing sources at the phase centre and using frequencies that are not multiples of 8 MHz. ATUC requests that a check list be produced so that users can avoid these problems.
- 25 ATUC requests the Director to investigate the operating costs of the multibeam system and take appropriate action.
- 26 ATUC commends the provision of the ATCA live page but suggests that some means be found to make the observations more understandable to the general public. ATUC notes that users are very willing to contribute this information if a convenient mechanism can be provided.
- 27 The Committee thanked the retiring Chairman Professor P M McCulloch for his diligent service to ATUC and the user community over the last several years.

P M McCulloch
Chairman