

Director's Response ATUC meeting 4 March 2003

From Previous ATUC meetings:

<p>2002Nov-1.</p> <p>We reiterate the usefulness of the Future Developments document to the user community.</p> <p>a) We request that ATNF maintains a high-level project overview available to the general community. When ATUC is asked to prioritise a new project, we would like to see information along the lines of: overall cost in dollars and effort, and a target completion date (for existing projects). This was provided previously in a concise spreadsheet form.</p> <p>We look forward to seeing all on-going projects showing a target date.</p>	<p>The ATNF is in the process of building a database for all ATNF projects. Ultimately this will hold all information formerly presented in the "Australia Telescope Development Plans" WWW page, with many other key project parameters. The information will include the dates of key project milestones.</p> <p>An initial version of the database has been constructed, and a version accessible to both users and ATNF project managers is currently under preparation. It is hoped to provide a demonstration of this database at the ATUC meeting.</p> <p>In addition all projects now report on a 3-monthly basis via project progress reports submitted to the Projects meeting (formerly the Future Developments meeting). Henceforth, the latest progress reports for all projects will be included with the papers sent to ATUC.</p> <p>The database and project reports (and time recording) form part of a more rigorous project management approach that is being implemented at the ATNF. Our goal is to eventually track and plan project activities in a common resource pool so we may more accurately predict our future resource demands and capability to embark on new projects.</p>
<p>2002Nov-7.</p> <p>We request ATNF thoroughly check the cross-referencing between the DA Checklist and the various ATCA web documentation.</p>	<p>The DA checklist has been updated and cross-referenced. See http://www.narrabri.atnf.csiro.au/observing/support/da_checklist.html</p> <p>(RJS)</p>
<p>2002Nov-10.</p> <p>a) ATUC is happy with the plan suggested by John Reynolds, to swap the 10/50cm receiver out 4 months into the NASA tracking period.</p> <p>b) As part of the next Parkes report to ATUC we would like to see a plan for receiver availability during 2004. This plan should be included in the call for proposals for the Jan04 term.</p>	<p>The call for proposals for the Jan04 Term included the best information to hand at that time concerning receiver availability, including the two key receiver systems, the pulsar 10/50 receiver and the 21cm multibeam system.</p> <p>A plan for the remainder of the year will be in place by the time of the next TAC meeting.</p> <p>[Note that a communication failure between ATUC and the ATNF led to the OiC Parkes being unaware of this requirement until after the Jan04 Term call for proposals</p>
<p>2002Nov-15.</p> <p>ATUC's concern about the impact of external contracts was not addressed in the response to question 15a in our last report: Are external contracts adversely impacting internal development projects?</p>	<p>There are a number of ways in which one can measure impact. The first is in the area of resource conflict; particularly where that results in delay. There have been two cases this year where external contracts have caused delays in internal development projects.</p> <p>The first of these was the development of the NASA/JPL 8GHz receiver as part of the Parkes Mars spacecraft tracking contract. When taking this job on last year we realised that it might cause some delays to other projects but considered this to be acceptable when weighed against the advantages to ATNF of maintaining the excellent</p>

	<p>relations with NASA that have been built up over the years. We tried to minimise the impact on other projects as much as possible but in the end there were some delays in both the 10/50 cm receiver, which will be installed around three months later than planned, and the ATCA 3mm system, which according to our current estimates will not suffer any delays, but the schedule has become quite tight.</p> <p>The second case was the overrun in the work on the SEST correlator upgrade, which has led to resource problems with the digital filter bank development, affecting the Mopra 8GHz Spectrometer project and to a lesser extent the MNR2001 broadband upgrade. The major problem here was that unexpected difficulties were encountered in the SEST work. The SEST work is now complete and we are working to minimise the impact on the internal projects.</p> <p>The impact of these external projects may also be measured by the opportunity to expand our ‘business’ – providing challenging and varied work and thereby attracting, motivating and retaining the world-class engineering staff for which ATNF is renowned. External projects also develop IP in key technology areas that benefits ATNF internal development projects. The financial benefits of external projects are also significant.</p>
<p>2002Nov-17.</p> <p>a) ATUC requests a brief technical comparison of existing SKA demonstrator options, by the end of April 2003.</p> <p>ATUC will then consider the scientific cases for each, based on the discussions that have taken place in 2002-2003. ATUC will publish a report discussing the matching science at the end of June 2003, allowing time for discussion before the next ATUC meeting.</p> <p>This item would be reviewed if or when any LOFAR decisions are made.</p> <p>b) ATUC requests an update of the status of the MNR2001 program as a whole, in the next ATUC meeting.</p>	<p>The original proposal to build an astronomical useful SKA demonstrator at Narrabri was beyond the available budget. Other options are now being considered and will be presented at the ATUC meeting.</p> <p>A status report on the MNR2001 program will be included as part of the SKA/LOFAR agenda item at the meeting.</p>

From ATUC Meeting 4 March 2003:

<p>2003Mar-1.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC have any comment on the new remote observing room set up?</i></p> <p>ATUC suggests the station needs some more desk space (for logbooks <i>etc</i>) and that either a laptop network connection port or another workstation be available.</p>	<p>A new linux workstation with two screens has been installed. A connection exists for laptops. Remaining steps are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - remove the old Sparc workstation; - purchase and install a larger desk.
<p>2003Mar-3.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC have any suggestions for the scheduling/operation of the ATCA during the IAU GA in July?</i></p> <p>ATUC suggests that the remote observing rules should be relaxed during the General Assembly and that this might be a useful maintenance period. We suggest it would be useful to have two duty astronomers during this period. ATUC also suggests that there be a demonstration of remote observing from the General Assembly conference venue.</p>	<p>Significant maintenance periods were scheduled at the ATCA and Mopra during the IAU fortnight. It was not possible to schedule two duty astronomers: attracting a single one during this period was a challenge in itself. It was possible to schedule to period with only modest inconvenience to people's IAU plans. The nature of the conference centre and the scheduled projects made remote observing unattractive.</p>
<p>2003Mar-4.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC consider the user community is adequately informed about the Mars tracking period at Parkes?</i></p> <p>ATUC suggests there be a short item in the next newsletter, showing the LST range affected by the tracking contract.</p>	<p>Some information on the Mars tracking programme, including the LST range will be included in the October 2003 Newsletter.</p>
<p>2003Mar-5.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC have any view on which Parkes receivers should be attended to next ? Is there any demand for the SETI receiver?</i></p> <p>ATUC suggests that the 22 GHz (K-band) receiver should be attended to next.</p> <p>ATUC requests updated information on the instantaneous bandwidth and sensitivity of the SETI receiver in comparison with the other Parkes receivers.</p>	<p>An upgrade of the Parkes 22 GHz (K-band) receiver will be a high priority once the commissioning of the 10/50cm receiver and refurbishment of the 21cm Multibeam are completed.</p> <p>The SETI receiver performance other details and will be presented at the November 2003 ATUC meeting.</p>
<p>2003Mar-6.</p> <p><i>Is ATUC concerned that the SPC software is supported at the correct level? Does ATUC consider it a priority issue to standardise and support spectral line single-dish software?</i></p>	

<p>SPC should be replaced as a matter of urgency. ATUC will compile a brief report which outlines the major problems with SPC, by 2003 May 1.</p> <p>We suggest that all spectral line single-dish data from AT facilities (including Tidbinbilla) should be able to be processed by a single software package. The obvious candidate for this is AIPS++.</p>	<p>The ATNF has included these suggestions into a new software development plan; a draft of which will be made available to ATUC at their meeting. Specifically, a preliminary target of Oct 2004 has been set for the replacement of the SPC.</p>
<p>2003Mar-7.</p> <p><i>Can ATUC suggest a solution to notifying users of expired VLBI proposals?</i></p> <p>ATUC is concerned that this has not yet been implemented. The solution is an email to the PI of the proposal once it is obvious the observing will not be completed in the current calendar year.</p>	<p>Notification of expired VLBI proposals has now been implemented. The new VLBI scheduler, Jim Lovell, has now commenced this notification process and this will continue as part of the scheduling process each term.</p>
<p>2003Mar-8.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC have any concerns regarding the proposal to shift some VLBI operations to the University of Tasmania?</i></p> <p>ATUC requests a report from the LBA coordinator regarding the VLBI review (to be held 2003 March 5), at the next ATUC meeting. We welcome any increase in the size of the VLBI group in Tasmania. ATUC requests that the impact on the general user community be considered.</p>	<p>The LBA coordinator will address these issues in his report to ATUC. Full reports of the VLBI review meeting and a subsequent VLBI operations meeting are available at http://www.atnf.csiro.au/vlbi/reports/ (Tasso)</p>
<p>2003Mar-9.</p> <p><i>Radio Quiet Zones. Given the Green Bank experience, that the management of a RQZ would require 1 FTE, does ATUC consider this would be a good use of resources, if such a zone were established?</i></p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Michelle Storey was appointed to head up the RQZ effort. Her role as interim LOFAR PM has impacted on her RQZ activities, but we aim to resolve this in early 2004 when we have greater clarity on the future of the LOFAR project.</p>
<p>2003Mar-11.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC have any concerns about the operations of the online archive?</i></p> <p>ATUC congratulates the ATNF on the rapid development of the online archive. We look forward to hearing about the plans for how the archive will be operated, particularly for large download requests, at the next ATUC meeting.</p>	<p>Collaboration between ATNF and CMIS (Mathematics and Information Systems) continues to develop the ATCA data archive. All ATCA data now resides on disks at CMIS Canberra, and a trial interface has been developed allowing selection and downloading of RPFITS files. Further development is required before the facility can be generally accessible.</p> <p>The ATNF has appointed a postdoctoral fellow (to commence in November, for two years) to work towards providing on-line data processing services. Ultimately this will allow the generation and delivery of ATCA images from the data archive. This work is part of the ATNF's involvement in Grid Computing</p>

	and Virtual Observatory technologies. Further updates will be provided at the ATUC meeting.
<p>2003Mar-13.</p> <p><i>Does ATUC consider that the ATCA positions and projects database is being managed properly?</i></p> <p>ATUC is concerned that the projects and positions database is not working properly, e.g. project C1110 (scheduled in Sep 2002) shows no observed positions. We request the database be updated before each call for proposals.</p>	<p>The projects and positions databases have been updated and will continue for the time being to be updated for each round of applications. Positions are currently available for observations taken by October 6 2003. Project records are available to the end of the 2003 May term.</p> <p>The interface to the positions archive has been improved to allow searches for multiple records and input catalogues. The searches are now considerably faster.</p> <p>Further work on the archives is planned for 2004, in particular to generate automatic updating of the positions archive on a daily, or near daily basis.</p>