

Director's response to ATUC Report – October 2011

ATUC recommendation	Director's response	Traffic light	Status
Commendations and successes			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We congratulate the ASKAP engineering team for getting the first phased array feed (PAF) on one of the Murchison Radio-Astronomy Observatory antennas. • ATUC and ATNF users are delighted to hear about revised Science Operations Centre (SOC) plans which mean that on-site visits to Narrabri will remain available for users. While users appreciate the flexibility of remote observing, all users - and particularly students - greatly value their time at Narrabri working with observatory staff. 	Noted and thanks		
Recommendations			
1. MOPRA			
a. ATUC urges CASS to retain Mopra as a National Facility telescope for two more winters to allow people to complete projects and potentially find external partners for continued operation of the facility.	We are aware that the timescale for changes to Mopra is very compressed. However, CSIRO financial support for Mopra will cease in October 2012. CASS therefore anticipates that Mopra will no longer be provided as part of the ATNF from that date. The situation will be reviewed based on the level of interest for supporting Mopra with non-CSIRO funding. We continue to advise proposers to assume that the 2012 April semester will be the last for Mopra as part of the ATNF (proposals due 16 January).	Red	
b. ATUC urges CASS to determine all PhD students who will be adversely affected by the closure of Mopra and ensure that these students and their supervisors are fully aware of the imminent closure so that they can make alternate plans. (Keeping Mopra operating as a National Facility for two more winters would help alleviate this problem as well.)	We will contact all students where this information was provided on proposals. A report will be given to ATUC at its next meeting.	Green	
2. LBA			
a. ATUC urges CASS to continue supporting VLBI observations with Mopra.	CSIRO will seek to retain access to the Mopra telescope for use in the LBA as it negotiates with potential partners for Mopra but will not fund Mopra solely for this purpose.	Yellow	
b. ATUC urges CASS to ensure that all LBA users are informed that 2012 will likely be the last winter semester with Mopra in the array.	Information on the future of Mopra is given in the call for proposals for 2012 APRS. This is stated clearly in both the Mopra and the Long Baseline Array sections of this web page.	Green	

3. PARKES			
a. ATUC recommends that CASS commence an extensive period of consultation with users in the context of the long term strategic plan before decisions about changes are made. We recommend that CASS prepare a "strawman model" for the community to discuss over the next few months.	An exploration of options for reducing current instrumentation has already been presented to ATUC. Specific instrumentation options will be presented to the community early in 2012 via the Australia Telescope Users Committee and the ATNF website. A consultation with the ATUC will be held in Marsfield on February 13, with an open session in the morning. A decision will be made following the receipt of the ATUC report from that meeting. The timescale for developing a strategy for new receivers is longer. CASS will be discussing this with ATUC at both the February meeting and future regular meetings.	Green	
b. ATUC encourages CASS to be mindful of the effects of minimal receiver changes on LBA requirements.	For the next few years receiver changes for LBA sessions will continue to be required to enable the current variety of proposals to be carried out. At present, the most requested LBA bands are 8.4 GHz, 6.7 GHz, 22 GHz, 2.3 GHz, and 1.6/1.4 GHz, and the first four are not widely used for single-dish Parkes observations. The effect of reducing the number of receivers and receiver changes on the LBA is being considered as the scenarios above are being developed.	Green	
c. ATUC recommends that CASS host student workshops and occasional science meetings at Parkes to ensure that observatory staff remain engaged in the science being conducted with Parkes and allow students to visit the telescope.	We plan to continue to host the Radio School in Parkes and the ATCA in alternate years. This will give the chance for new students to have hands-on experience with the telescopes. We will consider holding a more intensive induction session for new Parkes users on a yearly basis.	Green	
d. ATUC recommends that CASS investigate the feasibility of wideband, low frequency receivers for Parkes including both 600 MHz - 4 GHz and 4 - 25 GHz bands.	CASS understands the potential utility of receivers that cover these frequency bands and has already initiated investigations into the feasibility of their realisation.	Green	
4. ASKAP			
a. ATUC strongly recommends that CASS complete the 36 antenna system with PAFs installed, as most projects cannot operate without all 36 PAF-installed antennas.	We agree and thank the ATUC for its support. This reinforces the message from the recent CASS Science Review and other external science groups that completing ASKAP to the full original scope is the top priority for CASS. CASS is optimistic that funding can be found for completion of the remaining PAFs but notes that it is not yet secure.	Green/Yellow	

<p>b. ATUC recommends that CASS ensure that the telescope rapidly reach the stage of early science, with a reduced system temperature of the first 6 PAFs, so that the survey science teams can really test the system and publications can start to flow.</p>	<p>As proposed, CASS will make available the initial 6 BETA antennas with Mark I PAFs for early science as soon as practical, and we welcome the early engagement of various individuals from the SSP community to helping in this. However we remind the ATUC that the complexities of commissioning a totally new type of telescope (PAF-based) mean it will be some time before true science grade data output will be possible. Limited data sets for science teams will be available in late Q3 2012. Also, note that delaying the Mk I PAF deployment to allow for modifications so the upper end of the frequency band has lower temperature would take significant time and delay the overall deployment by at least 6 - 9 months. We do not consider this worthwhile, given that these Mk I systems are critical to commissioning the overall ASKAP system, and learning about interferometers using PAFs</p>	<p>Green/Yellow</p>	
<p>5. APR-2012 Time Assignment</p>			
<p>a. ATUC strongly supports the CASS suggestions that the Mopra proposal deadline be extended by a month to encompass the end of the consultation period and to allow more time for Mopra users to plan their proposals assuming that it is the last Mopra semester.</p>	<p>This has been done - the deadline for Mopra proposals has been extended by one month, to 16 January 2012.</p>	<p>Green</p>	
<p>b. ATUC also recommend that the TAC be sensitive to commenced PhD student projects that rely on Mopra to assist students to complete their science if possible.</p>	<p>This will be done. The TAC readers and members will be asked to be sensitive to proposals that include Mopra data needed for students to use as part of their PhDs. Specific instructions for the TAC have not yet been finalised.</p>	<p>Green</p>	
<p>c. ATUC recommends that the TAC consider very carefully the Mopra legacy projects, which are extremely important for a wide range of ALMA and Herschel projects.</p>	<p>CASS recognises the importance of the Mopra large projects and the scientific value in these being completed. The TAC members and readers will be advised to consider all large projects very carefully. Specific instructions for the TAC have not yet been finalised.</p>	<p>Green</p>	
<p>d. ATUC strongly recommends that CASS invite an external international millimetre expert to the TAC specifically to help rank Mopra proposals.</p>	<p>This has been done. John Carpenter from Caltech will be joining the TAC for the February meeting to help with the reviewing of Mopra proposals.</p>	<p>Green</p>	
<p>6. ATCA</p>			
<p>a. ATUC requests that CASS review how information about Miriad is distributed and ensure better communication in the future.</p>	<p>We will review communication on Miriad with ATUC at the next regular meeting to get further input. Briefly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miriad is distributed via anonymous ftp as bzip2'd tar files which are updated weekly; users with an ATNF computer account (most observers) might consider using rsync to 	<p>Green</p>	

	<p>update their Miriad installation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an ATNF Data Reduction mailing list, though it is generally only used to report the discovery of (and fix to) serious issues in myriad• The ATCA forum is used to discuss issues with Miriad and efforts to address these, and users of Miriad are encouraged to regularly review issues on (and contribute to!) the forum. A new thread has been started on the forum containing a summary of updates to Miriad: http://atcaforum.atnf.csiro.au/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=86• We are planning to trial a short monthly email to current ATCA users to update them on recent changes, including those to myriad.		
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