

## AAO ADVISORY COMMITTEE PUBLIC UPDATE

Meeting held 29 September 2011

The AAOAC held its second meeting at the AAO's Eastwood headquarters. This report summarises the advice that the AAOAC has to offer the Secretary and the AAO Director from its meeting.

### **2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure**

The AAOAC commends the Government on the preparation of the *2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure*, which will serve as an authoritative guide to the research infrastructure needs of our nation during the next decade. The Committee is satisfied that the Roadmap's *Astronomy* chapter reflects its own views of the national requirements, elaborating as it does the challenges facing the nation's astronomers and astrophysicists in a global environment in which the trends in both optical and radio astronomy are towards larger and more expensive telescopes and instrumentation that must be managed as shared international facilities. The AAO's *Forward Look* seeks to position the AAO during the lifespan of the Roadmap to continue to pursue world-class science effectively, via both state-of-the-art AAT instrumentation and support for international telescope access (as it currently does for Gemini and Magellan).

### **AAO Forward Look**

The *Forward Look* is a five-year implementation plan within the context of the Australian Astronomy Decadal Plan and more specifically, its 2011 Mid-Term Review. The AAOAC commends the Director on the excellent initial draft of the *Forward Look* document that he has produced. The Committee devoted considerable time to a thorough discussion of all aspects of the plan, and has provided the Director with extensive feedback on the draft document. The AAOAC notes that the Director intends to take this feedback into account before releasing a revised draft to the astronomy community for comment on 1 December. The Director then proposes to follow up with town-hall meetings at major centres around the country in December and January to obtain further feedback, with the goal of finalising the *Forward Look* by 1 March 2012.

### **Threats to telescopes operating environment**

The AAOAC notes with concern the threats to the AAT and UKST's operating environment through the gas exploration and open coal mining developments in close proximity to Siding Spring Observatory. It sees such developments as posing the greatest risk to the future operation of the AAO's telescopes, through the significant light pollution and dust that they will produce. It recommends that the AAO work with the Department to identify mitigating strategies, noting that it is particularly important to engage all parties involved.

### **Risk Management**

The AAOAC has reviewed the AAO's risk register, made some suggestions for improvement, and will review the AAO's risk exposure annually, with a particular emphasis on continuity of effective AAO operations. The threat to the operating environment of the AAO's telescopes due to nearby mining and gas developments should be included in the risk register.