

1 About the Anglo-Australian Observatory

Statement of purpose

The Anglo-Australian Observatory provides world-class optical and infrared observing facilities for British and Australian astronomers to ensure the best possible science. It also takes a leading role in the formulation of long-term plans and strategies for astronomy in both countries and, through its research and development of new instrumentation, contributes to the advance of astronomy internationally.

History and governing legislation

The Anglo-Australian Telescope Board is an independent, bi-national authority funded equally by the Governments of Australia and the United Kingdom. The Board operates under the *Anglo-Australian Telescope Agreement* which came into operation in February 1971 for an initial period of 25 years. If either Government wishes to withdraw from the Agreement after this period, it must give five years' notice. So far, neither party has done so, and both have indicated their support for the AATB until at least 2010.

The Board's facilities consist of the 3.9-metre Anglo-Australian Telescope (AAT) and the 1.2-metre UK Schmidt Telescope (UKST) on Siding Spring Mountain, outside Coonabarabran, NSW, and a laboratory in the Sydney suburb of Epping. Collectively, these form the Anglo-Australian Observatory (AAO).

Ministers responsible

The Minister responsible for the AAT Board in the United Kingdom is The Right Hon. Patricia Hewitt, MP, as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Minister responsible in Australia is The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training.



Above: Rob Patterson (AAO) scaling the telescope dome during the repair of the shutter mechanism. Photo courtesy Kristin Fiegert

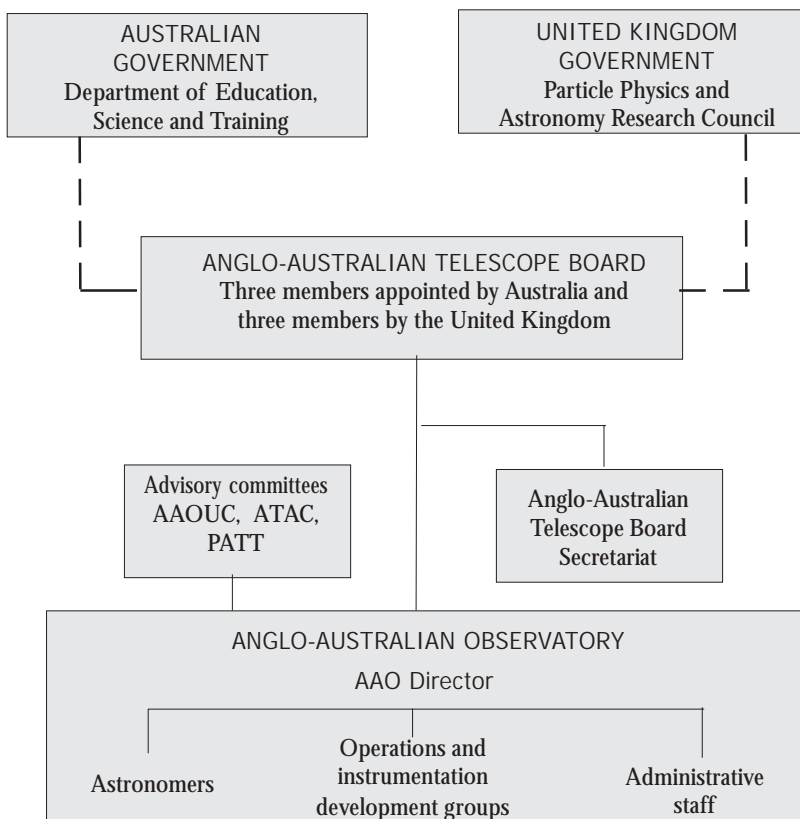
Designated agencies

Pursuant to Article 1 (2) of the Anglo-Australian Telescope Agreement, each Government acts through an agency designated for the purpose. These Designated Agencies are the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC) of the United Kingdom. These agencies are jointly responsible for implementing the Agreement.

Structure of the AAO

The AAT Board oversees the operations of the Anglo-Australian Observatory, as Figure 1.1 shows. Apart from an active research group, the Observatory has internationally recognised optical, mechanical, electronics and engineering groups as well as a specialised software group. These five groups are critical to the maintenance and the day-to-day operations of both the telescopes and to the development of state-of-the-art instrumentation. A small administration group contributes significantly to the effective operation of the Observatory.

Figure 1.1 General structure of the AAT Board and the AAO





Board members

The AAT Board has six members, three appointed by each country, and the role of Chair alternates between the two countries. At 30 June 2004 the members were:

Australia

Professor R D Ekers (Chair), Professor K C Freeman, Professor L Cram

United Kingdom

Professor M Birkinshaw (Deputy Chair), Dr P Roche, Mr G Brooks

Further details of Board members, special responsibilities and Board meetings are included in Appendix C.

Above: Allan Lankshear (AAO) supervising a crane operation from the top of the telescope dome. Photo courtesy Kristin Fiegert

AAO Director

The AAO Director, Dr Matthew Colless, is responsible for the successful operation of the telescopes, for providing the best possible facilities for all telescope users and for ensuring that the Observatory maintains its high standing in the international scientific community. The Director also actively pursues his own scientific research. In 2004 Dr Colless became a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.

Advisory committees

The Anglo-Australian Observatory Users' Committee (AAOUC) advises the Director on aspects of the Observatory's operation.

Observing time on the AAT is allocated by two national committees: the Australian Time Assignment Committee (ATAC) and the UK Panel for the Allocation of Telescope Time (PATT).

Details of these committees are also included in Appendix C.

