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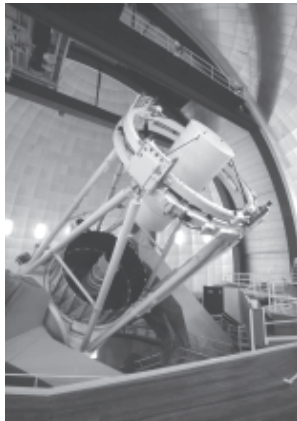
About the AAO



Statement of purpose

The Anglo-Australian Observatory (AAO) provides world-class optical and infrared observing facilities enabling Australian and British astronomers to do excellent science. The AAO is a world leader in astronomical research and in the development of innovative telescope instrumentation. It also takes a leading role in the formulation of long-term plans for astronomy in Australia and the United Kingdom.

History and governing legislation



In 1969 the governments of Britain and Australia decided to establish and operate a large optical telescope in Australia for use by Australian and British astronomers. The *Anglo-Australian Telescope Agreement Act 1970*, which came into effect in February 1971, gave effect to this decision. The Act established the Anglo-Australian Telescope

*The Anglo-Australian Telescope,
(photo: Shaun Amy)*

Board (AATB) as the independent bi-national entity that owns and operates the telescope, with funding provided equally by the Governments of Australia and the United Kingdom.

The 3.9-metre Anglo-Australian Telescope (AAT) was opened in 1974 on Siding Spring Mountain near Coonabarabran in north-west NSW. In 1988, the operation of another telescope on the same site, the 1.2-metre UK Schmidt Telescope (UKST), was transferred to the AATB. These two telescopes, together with the Epping headquarters facility and instrumentation laboratory, collectively form the Anglo-Australian Observatory (AAO).

The UK Schmidt Telescope at Siding Spring Mountain, (photo: Shaun Amy)



The Anglo-Australian Telescope at Siding Spring Mountain, (photo: Shaun Amy)





The AAO laboratory, Epping (photo: Urs Klauser)

Ministers responsible

The Minister responsible for the AAT Board in the United Kingdom is The Right Hon. Alan Johnson, 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.

Structure of the AAO

The AAT Board oversees the operations of the AAO. The Observatory has active and internationally recognised research, instrument science and instrumentation groups. Figure 1.1 shows the structure of the AAO. These 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 supports the operations of the Observatory.

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. One Board member from each country has been nominated to represent their respective Designated Agency on matters relating to the Agreement.

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.

Audit and Risk Management Committee

The AAT Board has established the Audit and Risk Management Committee to improve its corporate governance. Details of the Committee are included in Appendix D.

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 included in Appendix D.

Figure 1.1 General structure of the AAO

