

PUBLIC SUMMARY

Meeting of the National Committee for Astronomy

Ian Potter House, Canberra

7 December 2009

www.aao.gov.au/nca

NCA: Matthew Colless (Chair), Brian Boyle, Harvey Butcher, Warrick Couch, John Dickey, Elaine Sadler, Stuart Wyithe

Invitees: Martin Cole (AAL Chair), Jeanette Mill (AAS, minutes)

Apologies: Lister Staveley-Smith, Michelle Simmons (AAS Council)

1 Community feedback

These public summaries of NCA meetings are available under [Current Issues](#) on the [NCA web pages](#).

2 NCA membership

The current members of the NCA are listed [here](#). The terms of Matthew Colless and Warrick Couch end on 31 Dec 2009, and Brian Boyle will resign when the new ATNF Director is appointed. As AAO Director, Matthew will be re-nominated, but with Warrick and Brian going off the committee, Warrick's replacement needs to be another Fellow, as there have to be at least two Fellows on the Committee. The NCA has nominated two Fellows for the vacant position, one of whom will be selected by the AAS Council.

3 NCA statement of purpose

The NCA has adopted a new statement of purpose, given below and on the [NCA home page](#):

The National Committee for Astronomy exists to foster astronomy in Australia, to liaise with international scientific bodies, and to advise the Council of the Australian Academy of Science on relevant matters. The NCA acts as a peak body for astronomy in Australia, with the aims of promoting the national value and benefits of the astronomical sciences, facilitating community-wide strategic planning initiatives, and managing relations between Australian astronomers and the International Astronomical Union.

4 IAU General Assembly

The XXVII General Assembly was held in Rio de Janeiro over 3-14 August 2009. There were a total of 2434 attendees from 76 countries; the IAU currently has 68 national members (i.e. countries) and 10,142 individual members (including 357 new members). The GA scientific program included 4 invited discourses, 6 major symposia, 16 joint discussion meetings, 10 special sessions and associated events held by the Women in Astronomy and Young Astronomers groups. The General Assembly also sponsored a number of events celebrating the International Year of Astronomy.

Australia joined the IAU in 1939, so 2009 was the 70th anniversary of our national membership. The GA approved all 32 Australian membership applications, giving Australia a total of 262 individual IAU members. Australians now on IAU committees include: Matthew Colless (Vice-President, Executive Committee), Ken Freeman (Special Nominating Committee), Rachel Webster (Resolutions Committee), and Sarah Maddison (Chair, Women in Astronomy); Elaine Sadler is President of Division VIII (Galaxies and the Universe).

The XXVIII IAU General Assembly will be held in Beijing on 12-25 August 2012, and the XXVIX IAU General Assembly in 2015 will be held in Honolulu.

5 International Year of Astronomy 2009

Helen Sim provided a [progress report](#) on Australia's involvement in IYA. More than 500 IYA-related events have taken place in Australia to date.

6 Mid-Term Review of the Decadal Plan

The NCA discussed and agreed [the plan for the Mid-Term Review](#) of the Astronomy Decadal Plan, including the terms of reference, the process, the timeline, and the membership of the Mid-Term Review Committee. This plan has now been publicly released and all members of the astronomy community are encouraged to contribute to the review process.

7 ESO Working Group

The NCA reviewed the [revised plan for the ESO Working Group](#) proposed by the AAL Board. The NCA endorsed the plan and recommended that the Working Group should coordinate closely with the Mid-Term Review Committee. Any decisions on whether and how to proceed with submitting a proposal for joining ESO will be taken jointly by the NCA and the AAL Board in light of the recommendations from the Mid-Term Review and discussions with the Department of Innovation.

8 Meeting Dates

The next NCA meeting will be held on 6 July 2009 at the University of Tasmania during the ASA's Annual Scientific meeting. As is traditional, this meeting will be held jointly with an Astronomy Heads of Departments meeting.

Matthew Colless, NCA Chair (colless@aao.gov.au)