

Astronomy NCRIS: 2006/07 Progress Report

2nd November 2007

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Executive Summary

Astronomy Australia Limited (AAL) was incorporated in April 2007 to co-ordinate matters of national astronomy infrastructure. As of 30th June 2007, it had established an office at Swinburne University of Technology and appointed a Chief Operating Officer, Company Secretary, Accountant, Lawyer and Auditor, as well as an interim board of directors. It has implemented insurance arrangements and appropriate banking and financial control arrangements for managing multi-million dollar grants.

It has put in place many of the contracts necessary to manage the various NCRIS projects, and established regular communications with stakeholders of Australian astronomy to ensure information about AAL decisions is disseminated effectively.

There were no major changes from the work identified in the Interim Implementation Plan, and as of the date of this report, all milestones in the Interim Implementation Plan have been completed. However, during this timeframe, there was a large increase in the funding for the ASKAP project awarded to CSIRO. This has understandably led to updates to the ASKAP project plan, delaying the signing of the ASKAP NCRIS subcontract between AAL and CSIRO.

Activities Undertaken

Activities during the 2006/07 period focused primarily on establishing Astronomy Australia Limited as a company and signing the subcontractor agreements for each of the projects funded through the astronomy NCRIS agreement. The company is now fully established with a Chief Operating Officer employed at 0.8FTE (as at 30 June 2007) and an office hosted at Swinburne University of Technology. Communications have begun with members and other stakeholders, and the NCRIS agreement with DEST was signed as per the original schedule. Unfortunately the subcontractor agreements were delayed due to various reasons (see the Progress Against Milestones section for explanations) but all are now in place.

At the first meeting of the board of directors of AAL, held 24 April 2007, the following vision statement for AAL was accepted:

“To provide an efficient structure to facilitate Australian investment in astronomical facilities and to be recognised by stakeholders of Australian astronomy as the organisation to co-ordinate matters of national astronomy infrastructure”.

The directors also appointed a chair for the nominations committee (Elaine Sadler), considered the initial plans submitted by each the project, discussed the initial draft of the NCRIS sub-contracts and drafted a process for deciding the funding for the strategic options.

Progress Against Milestones

A. Governance

Milestone	Due	Progress
Incorporation of AAL.	Apr 2007	Completed – 18 Apr 2007
First AAL board meeting.	Apr 2007	Completed – 24 Apr 2007
Opening of AAL office at Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn.	Apr 2007	Completed – 23 Apr 2007
Nominations Committee meeting	May 2007	Completed – 29 May 2007
NCRIS contract signed with DEST.	Jun 2007	Completed – 20 Jun 2007
Gemini contract with the Australian Research Council (ARC).	Jun 2007	Completed – 1 Sep 07; Delayed due to the complicated nature of the original LIEF grant which involved various collaborative organisations.
US\$6.5M hedging contract signed with the NAB.	Jun 2007	<p>Completed – 26 Oct 07 (for US\$5.8M); There is still uncertainty regarding the amount due and the sources of funding for the 2011 calendar year Gemini Operations payments. The AAL Board has therefore decided to only hedge the 2008, 2009 and 2010 payments. This is why the amount hedged is US\$5.8M not US\$6.5M as originally planned.</p> <p>This contract was delayed because it was not possible to hedge with the bank until AU\$1.5M security for the hedging contract had been received. The Gemini Reserve, which is not part of the astronomy NCRIS, has now been received from the ARC and is available to be used as security.</p>
Anglo-Australian Telescope (AAT) instrument, AAT refurbishment and Australian Gemini Office contract signed with AATB.	Jun 2007	Completed – 13 Aug 07; Delayed while the generic terms of the NCRIS agreement were approved by all participants.

Pathfinder for an International Large Optical Telescope (PILOT) design study contract signed with the University of New South Wales (UNSW).	Jun 2007	Completed – 27 Aug 07; Delayed due to negotiations regarding access to the IP in the PILOT design.
Australian Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) Project Office contract signed with the Australian National University (ANU).	Jun 2007	Completed – 3 Sep 07; Delayed as the contract needed to fit within the broader context of Australian involvement in the GMT project. The views of relevant stakeholders have matured over the past several months to a point where the contract can be signed.

B. Promotion

Milestone	Due	Progress
Logo and letterhead available.	Apr 2007	Completed – 18 Apr 2007
Website released.	Apr 2007	Completed – 25 Apr 2007
Email introducing AAL to professional astronomers.	Apr 2007	Completed – 3 May 2007
Quarterly electronic newsletters published.	Apr 2007	Completed – 2 May 2007
Announcement of first General Meeting.	Apr 2007	Completed – 2 May 2007

Financial Summary

The main deviations from what was reported in the interim implementation plan are:

1. The GMT DDP in-kind contribution of \$1,373,438 from the ANU to the GMT PO (USA) actually took place during 2005/06. This is stated in footnote 1 on page 35 of the Project Plan.
2. The \$1,235,294 from the GSKA MNRF to AAL was not transferred until 18th July 2007 and is therefore not included in the 2006/07 accounts.

List of transactions (exclusive of GST)

Facility	Item	Cash / in-kind	Transaction Type	From / To	Budget - Receipts	Budget - Payments	Actual - Receipts	Actual - Payments
Gemini	ASPEN	In-kind	Receipts	GSKA MNRF	\$281,735		\$273,077	
Gemini	ASPEN	In-kind	Payments – International Access	NSF (USA)		\$281,735		\$273,077
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Receipts	GSKA MNRF	\$273,858		\$273,843	
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Payments – International Access	NSF (USA)		\$273,858		\$273,843
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Receipts	GSKA MNRF	\$261,668		\$261,668	
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Payments – International Access	NSF (USA)		\$261,668		\$261,668
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Receipts	GSKA MNRF	\$257,168		\$257,482	
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Payments – International Access	NSF (USA)		\$257,168		\$257,482
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Receipts	ARC	\$913,700		\$912,354	

List of transactions (exclusive of GST)

Facility	Item	Cash / in-kind	Transaction Type	From / To	Budget - Receipts	Budget - Payments	Actual - Receipts	Actual - Payments
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Payments – International Access	NSF (USA)		\$913,700		\$912,354
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Receipts	ARC	\$936,543		\$878,009	
Gemini	Gemini operations	In-kind	Payments – International Access	NSF (USA)		\$936,543		\$878,009
Gemini	AusGO	In-kind	Receipts	ARC	\$292,000		\$200,733	
Gemini	AusGO	In-kind	Payments – Operating	ANU		\$292,000		\$200,733
AAL	AAL Operations	Cash	Receipts	AAL members	\$32,410		\$29,370	
AAL	AAL Operations	Cash	Payments – Operating	AAL		\$32,410		\$3,047
AAL	AAL Operations	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$183,500		\$183,500	
AAL	AAL Operations	Cash	Payments – Operating	AAL		\$183,500		\$183,500

List of transactions (exclusive of GST)

Facility	Item	Cash / in-kind	Transaction Type	From / To	Budget - Receipts	Budget - Payments	Actual - Receipts	Actual - Payments
AAO	AAT instrument	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$400,000		\$400,000	
AAO	AAT refurbishment	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$500,000		\$500,000	
Gemini	ASPEN	Cash	Receipts	GSKA MNRIF	\$1,255,000		\$0	
GMT	GMT DDP	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$1,249,440		\$1,249,440	
GMT	AGMTPO	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$64,000		\$64,000	
Strategic Options	GMT/PILOT/ 8m	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$1,356,375		\$1,356,375	
ASKAP	ASKAP development	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$4,922,685		\$4,922,685	
PILOT	PILOT Design Study	Cash	Receipts	NCRIS	\$560,000		\$560,000	
AAL	AAL Operations	Cash	Receipts	Interest	\$0		\$9	
TBD	TBD	Cash	Receipts	Interest	\$0		\$3,561	

Cash

The transactions labelled "Cash" have occurred via AAL, and total a net cash inflow of \$9,082,393 exclusive of GST. As the attached audited financial report for AAL confirms:

Net cash inflow of NCRIS grant and members fees:	\$9,082,393	(from above table)
GST liability:	<u>\$914,611</u>	(financial report page 22)
Cash held by AAL at 30 th June 2007:	\$9,997,004	(financial report page 15)

In-kind

The transactions labelled "in-kind" have not occurred via AAL, and the attached statements from the relevant institutions confirm these amounts. In summary:

Payments to the NSF (USA) for Gemini Operations	\$2,583,356
Payments to the NSF (USA) for Aspen programme	\$273,077
Australian Gemini Office expenses	<u>\$200,733</u>
Total	\$3,057,166

I hereby confirm that all Funding received was expended for the Project and in accordance with the astronomy NCRIS funding agreement.



Martin Cole

Chair

2nd November 2007

Attachments

Performance against Indicators

N/A – AAL was not responsible for Gemini during 2006/07. Gemini is currently the only project with performance indicators.

Financial Statements

AAL Financial Statement and Auditor's Report

See separate attachment

GSKA M NRF Statement Confirming In-kind Contribution



CSIRO Australia Telescope National Facility
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Mr. Mark McAuley
Chief Operating Officer
Astronomy Australia Limited
c/o- Swinburne University of Technology (H39 CASC)
1 Alfred St.
Hawthorn VIC 3122

29 August 2007

Dear Mark,

Below tables all amounts paid from CSIRO Australia Telescope National Facility to the National Science Foundation in the 2006/2007 financial year:

Date	Item	Amount AU\$
28 August 2006	Gemini operations	273,843.38
29 March 2007	Gemini operations	261,667.70
23 May 2007	Gemini operations	257,482.30
22 June 2007	ASPEN	273,076.83

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil Derwent".

Neil Derwent
Finance Manager
CSIRO Australia Telescope National Facility

Australian Science, Australia's Future

ANU Statement Confirming In-kind Contribution



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Research School of Astronomy & Astrophysics
College of Science
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Australia

Phone: 61 2 6125 0247
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Mark McAuley
Chief Operating Officer
Astronomy Australia Ltd
c/o Swinburn University of Technology
1 Alfred St
Hawthorn Vic 3122
11th September 2007

Statement of Expenditure Australian Gemini Office 2006/2007

According to the ledger, the Australian National University, through the Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics, spent \$200,733 on Australian Gemini Office expenses in the 2006/2007 financial year.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Mary McDonald'.

Mary McDonald
RSAA Business Officer

ARC Statement Confirming In-kind Contribution



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

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24 October 2007

ARC project ref: LE0668351

Mark McAuley
 Chief Operating Officer
 Astronomy Australia Ltd
 c/o Swinburne University of Technology
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 1 Alfred Street
 Hawthorne, Victoria 3122

Dear Mr McAuley

ARC GEMINI PAYMENTS IN 2006/07

Thank you for your email of 29 August 2006 requesting confirmation of payments made to the NSF for the Gemini Project. You will be aware that the ARC has been providing funding to the University of Sydney as the Administering Organisation for the Gemini project until the recent execution of a Deed of Novation transferring the ARC grant to Astronomy Australia Ltd which will now administer the grant.

As part of the Novation of the Deed the University of Sydney sent a reconciliation statement to the ARC showing all funds received for the grant and dispensed to the United States of America's National Science Foundation (NSF) to support Gemini under an international MOU. The funds paid to the NSF may include ARC, other University and other organisation contributions.

The reconciliation statement shows the funds paid as:

Gemini funds paid out to the US NSF in July '06, March'07 and July'07			
Ledger Description	Due	Paid	Amount AUD
NATIONAL SCIENCE 2ND HALF CONT	1-Jul-06	26-Jul-06	\$ 912,353.64
E190307 NATIONAL SF GEMINI HALF C	15-Mar-07	20-Mar-07	\$ 878,008.75
NATIONAL SCIENCE AUST CONST	1-Jul-07	27-Jul-07	\$ 803,669.34
Total			\$ 2,594,031.73

RESEARCH *in the national interest - enabling the future*

If you require further information, please contact Dr Stan Miller, Assistant Director,
Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities scheme on 02 6287 6670.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. Cameron", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Andrew Cameron
Director, Finance
Australian Research Council