ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Incorporated in the ACT
ABN 37 660 297 848

Activity and Priorities: 2019-2022

During 2018 the ASA Council has undertaken a strategic planning exercise to understand the short, medium and long-term goals of the Society, and to allow short term priorities to be placed in a broader strategic context. Broad goals of the ASA include fostering community among its membership through regular meetings including the Annual Science Meeting and promoting diversity and inclusion in Australian astronomy. The ASA also seeks to support and recognize the achievements of Australian astronomers at all career stages through mentoring, education and awards. Through synthesising input from Chapters, this document articulates the priorities of the ASA, and identifies opportunities toward maximising the effectiveness of the ASA in achieving its mission. Broadly the ASA undertakes work in all areas for which it aspires to contribute but will look to expand its scope and impact of its activities.

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The ASA in Australian Astronomy

The ASA provides a community forum for Australian astronomers and represents their interests individually and collectively. The Society fosters Australian astronomy through regular scientific meetings, the publication of a scientific journal, and workshops and activities to support students and early-career researchers. The ASA provides input into national policy and is one of three national organisations in Australian astronomy, alongside the National Committee for Astronomy (NCA) and Astronomy Australia Limited (AAL). The NCA is a committee of the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) and provides Australia's link with the International Council for Science (ICSU) and its constituent bodies and committees, in particular the International Astronomical Union (IAU).

The Society is a member of: Science & Technology Australia and the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) and provides representatives on: the National Committee for Astronomy (NCA), the Standards Australia committees LG2 (Road Lighting) and LG10 (Obtrusive Lighting), and the committee administering the Donovan Astronomical Trust. The ASA is Trustee of the Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy (FAA), whose purpose is to allow the support of prizes, scholarships, research and facilities.

The Society has adopted a structure in which topical interest groups may be formed, known as Chapters. Currently there are four Chapters:

- Australian National Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics (ANITA), a virtual institute which aims to raise the profile of Australian theoretical astrophysics
- Early Career Researchers (ECR), aiming to support the needs and development of Early Career Researchers in the Australian astronomy community
- Education and Public Outreach Chapter (EPOC), serving to advance the level of public awareness of the excitement of astronomy
- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity in Astronomy (IDEA) (formerly 'Women in Astronomy'), to monitor and promote the status of women working in astronomy in Australia and address broader diversity issues in our community

Chapters undertake many of the significant Society activities. The activities and priorities of the Chapters are therefore central to charting the ASA's strategy. Statements of activities and aspirations for the ASA Chapters are outlined below. The ASA publishes an on-line refereed journal, the Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia (PASA). PASA is currently published by Cambridge University Press.

Theoretical Astrophysics in Australia

The Australian National Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics (ANITA) is a Chapter of the ASA which provides a vehicle to ensure that the needs of Australian theoretical and computational astrophysics are represented at a national and international level. The goals of ANITA are to raise the profile of Australian theoretical astrophysics, encourage national collaboration, foster international links, facilitate theoretical astrophysics meetings, and provide input into national policy.

Theoretical astrophysics groups throughout Australia benefit from interaction and the exchange of ideas and techniques. ANITA promotes communication, provides a positive environment for collaboration and provides a focus for the members of its community. Regular workshops provide one way of bringing theoreticians together. ANITA is proactive in supporting the careers of theoretical astrophysicists. An important concern of ANITA is the establishment of career paths for students of theoretical astrophysics.

Theoretical astrophysics has a number of broad and complementary roles. These include collaboration with observers in the interpretation and modelling of data, the establishment of physical and mathematical frameworks on which future observational strategies are based and participation in proposals for new observational and theoretical facilities. It is a function of ANITA to promote and enhance such activities and ensure that the substantial intellectual contributions of Australian theoreticians are recognized and supported. This means that ANITA plays a significant role in reviews of Australian Astronomy, making the case that new proposals factor in support for theoreticians, and seeking representation on appropriate committees.

Theoretical astrophysicists require a sound grounding in physics and mathematics as well as specialised undergraduate and graduate courses. Examples of how ANITA may contribute in this area include the organisation of the delivery of lecture courses via newly emerging communication technologies and organisation of a national summer school for students aspiring to either theoretical or observational research.

In this context ANITA has the following priorities:

1) *Continue the annual meeting and school, and to keep the registration fee free to encourage broad student participation*
2) *An increase to the ASA travel grant funding, from which theory students not covered by large (observational) funding streams would benefit in particular*
3) *Seek sources of external funding to support ANITA's long-term goals, including the creation of a national theory fellowship scheme*
4) *Expanding activity to two ANITA-organised events per year, e.g. astro-informatics as part of the HWSA and a science-themed workshop in February*
5) *Sponsor theory workshops on science-specific topics*

ASA Early Career researchers

The primary goal of the ECR Chapter of the ASA is to support the needs and development of ECRs in the Australian astronomy community through informing the members about opportunities for training and support; providing training for the members in areas of professional development; connecting members with other ECR, senior researcher mentors, and a support network; and acting as an advocacy and representation body for the members of the chapter through pushing for ECRs to be included on decision making panels (TACs, committees, reviews, selection committees).

The Chapter aims to connect the ECR community with relevant national and international ECR activities and opportunities, and will also act as a resource to which ECRs can turn for information and support, as individual needs arise. The Chapter aims to provide training for its members in areas of professional development workshops, which are focused on the needs of ECRs, including on career development or securing a job.

In addition to enhancing current activities, the Chapter has plans to expand its future interests. These include expanding the focus of workshops from academic skills training as it has been in the past, to include focus on non-academic pathways; and creating a job register portal for the Australian Astronomy Community. The ECR chapter sees training and supporting ECRs for "industry jobs" as an immediate evolution of focus. This will have the additional benefit of facilitating better engagement between astronomers and industry.

The ECR chapter would like to achieve the following:

1) *Prepare graduate students for the reality of the academic job market, maintain a knowledge base with steps towards making the switch to non-academic jobs, and increase training/internship opportunities with Industry partners*
2) *Curate a list of ex-astronomers who can be contacted directly by chapter members, and organize more frequent local meetups with ex-astronomers*
3) *Create a network of ECRs and provide linkages to the IAU Office of Young astronomers*
4) *Closer collaboration with organizers of the ASA's established early career focused events like the Harley Wood School for Astronomy*

ASA Education and Public Outreach

Many members of the ASA are involved in astronomy Education and Public Outreach at all levels of society, ranging from school visits to university education, media contacts and activities for the general public. The Education and Public Outreach Chapter (EPOC) is a Chapter of the ASA providing a forum to discuss and promote these activities, whilst also initiating some of its own. EPOC and ASA members contribute to a number of IAU committees and chapters related to EPO.

Astronomy Education and Public Outreach has benefited greatly from the vital role played by planetariums, observatory visitor centres, public observatories, science centres and museums and community-based Astronomical Societies. EPOC should strengthen links with amateur and professional astronomers by providing a conduit to the professional astronomy community. EPOC also takes responsibility of acting strategically on matters of national importance, such as input to/commentary on major revisions to the Australian Curriculum, the implementation of new science engagement policies such as "Inspiring Australia", or broader advocacy on issues relating to astronomy Education and Public Outreach through involvement in events such as "Science meets Parliament".

In recent years there has been considerable discussion around the need to build STEM skills among students with some focus on targeting girls and women in particular. EPOC members are already working with science teacher groups to identify areas needing resources and teacher professional development. Existing national programs such as the CSIRO-managed *STEM Professionals in Schools* and *National Science Week* already have solid involvement from EPOC and ASA members. EPOC should partner with the teams behind programs such as these to promote them or host awareness sessions.

Given the recent increase in the professional EPO astronomy community, EPOC has moved from a model of EPO activity provider to the key role being providing support and encouragement for those members interested in developing EPO skills. However given the relatively small size of the local professional astronomy EPO community it is useful to maintain and foster external contacts so as to bring in new ideas and approaches. EPOC should highlight the diversity of meetings on offer including regional, state and national science teacher conferences, science communication meetings, museum and science centre meetings and similar events then encourage members to attend and present. EPOC could also consider co-hosting, co-locating or organising relevant events or meetings.

In recent years there has been an increased focus on development, through for example the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development, which provides a vehicle for professional astronomers to use their skills to the benefit of their community (broadly defined). EPOC and the ASA could consider goals for development in addition to education and outreach.

In this context EPOC has the following goals, taking advantage of current opportunities:

1) *Survey the membership and maintain a record of EPO capability and staffing across members, and provide the focal point of interaction between Australian professional astronomers and the broader astronomy education and outreach community*
2) *Secure funding to underwrite annual or biannual EPOC workshops in order to make such events accessible to all members in the community, and host an international EPO conference*
3) *Increase contact between ASA/EPOC and similar associations in other countries with the intent of sharing best practice and potentially co-developing programs*
4) *Contribute to programs of STEM skills and awareness using expertise and examples from Australian astronomy*

Inclusion and Diversity in Australian Astronomy

Originally established in 2009 as the Women in Astronomy (WiA) Chapter of the ASA, with the goal of raising the profile of women in Australian astronomy, the chapter broadened its aims in 2016 to encompass wider issues of diversity. This expansion of the Chapter's remit was accompanied by a new name to reflect the change: Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in Astronomy (IDEA). The overarching objective of the IDEA Chapter is to achieve an environment in all institutions associated with Australian astronomy that is welcoming and supportive of all academic staff, professional staff and students, regardless of gender and sexual identity, ethnic and cultural background, disability, age, family/carer responsibilities, political affiliation, and religious belief.

Working toward this goal, the IDEA Chapter has launched a number of initiatives to help drive both structural and cultural improvements within the organisations active in Australian astronomy. These include the annual IDEA (formerly WiA) Workshops which provide fora for discussion of a wide range of issues, from ways to increase the representation of women in senior academic roles to the obstacles faced by LGBTIQ astronomers. IDEA holds an annual Rainbow Dinner in conjunction with the Annual Science Meeting of the ASA, with the intention of providing a safe, supportive space for LGBTIQ astronomers and Allies to network. IDEA also jointly sponsors Speed Meet-a-Mentor. This informal event, held in collaboration with the ECR Chapter at the Annual Science Meeting of the ASA, is intended to allow ECR researchers from diverse backgrounds to benefit from the experience and advice of more senior astronomers.

IDEA could consider developing additional goals towards engaging, recruiting, and mentoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers in the ASA and affiliated organisations (universities and institutes), as well as towards promoting indigenous cultural competence training for ASA members.

The Pleiades awards, inspired by the Athena-SWAN awards, recognise institutions that have taken concrete steps toward improving their policies and workplace environment for diverse staff and students. The existence of this scheme has helped to motivate positive change in Australian astronomy organisations.

The IDEA chapter has the following goals and priorities over the next five years:

1) *Mentoring of all Australian astronomy institutions to achieve at least Bronze Pleiades status*
2) *Pushing for consideration of institutional Pleiades / SAGE status as a factor in deciding which organisations will host Australian astronomy (including ASA) meetings*
3) *Establishment of an award for people who have been outstanding role models in advancing the goals of the IDEA Chapter*
4) *Increase in the visibility and understanding of the ASA Code of Conduct, and strengthening mechanisms for investigating and responding to reported breaches of the Code*
5) *Support and participation in events dealing with diversity in STEM, SAGE, and broader equity and diversity issues beyond the astronomy community*

Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia

Over the past 10 years the PASA Editorial Board has focussed on internationalising PASA, and in the process raised its profile and the quality and quantity of papers published. PASA's 2016 ISI two-year impact factor was a record 4.095, a regime comparable to traditional journals like MNRAS. This result has been achieved through initiatives such is the introduction of Dawes reviews and of a more positive author experience, and has made PASA attractive for mainstream astronomical publications.

PASA occupies a niche in the astronomical journal market and has the capacity to take a leading role in the publication of papers associated with the technical side of astronomy including software, pipelines, algorithms, visualisation techniques, and creation and management of data repositories and virtual observatory services. These topics are of increasing importance as we move to truly 'big data', with Australia to become the home of an SKA science data processing regional centre.

A new area in which PASA has the capacity to take a leading role is in addressing diversity in publications by monitoring publications statistics and actively encouraging the diversity of authors, including soliciting Dawes reviews and special collection papers from women and other minorities.

The ASA believes that PASA should be an outlet for papers that meet the same quality and interest threshold as traditional top-tier astronomy journals. It should be stressed that with its success PASA has become self-sustaining. An issue that should be addressed concerns the relatively low volume of papers published compared with larger international journals. The Editorial Board will proactively ensure a minimum level of scientific interest for papers appearing in PASA, while also seeking to grow the volume of submissions.

Within this context the focus for development PASA will be the following:

1) *Expand PASA's reputation and standing as a first rate astronomical journal, particularly by reaching out to the astronomical community in the Asia-Pacific, and exploiting PASA's unique position in the market*
2) *Continue to solicit high quality Dawes Reviews and maintain high-impact, timely collections of papers*
3) *Further engage with and target the community publishing astronomical software and pipelines, and encourage the use of PASA as an outlet for major Australian facilities and surveys*
4) *Commit to improve diversity in publication by developing a program to solicit papers from women and other minorities, and to track gender statistics in publications*

The Annual Science Meeting:

An Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) has been held in conjunction with the Society Annual General Meeting (AGM) since the ASA's formation in 1966. Alongside involvement with Chapters, the ASA ASM provides the key connection of ASA members with the operations of the Society. The ASM attracts over 200 people. Of these, around 40-50% are usually students. Traditionally there have been two primary motivations behind the ASM:

- to bring together astronomers from across Australia to see what their colleagues in other fields of astronomy are doing and increase dialogue across fields and institutions.
- to provide a forum for students to present their work to a broad professional audience, often for the first time.

With recent growth in Australian astronomy, the community attendance at the ASM is now too large to provide a single program that can include the majority of astronomers who would like to present their work. This pressure on the scientific program serves to undermine the two traditional motivations by forcing the introduction of parallel sessions which limits the range of fields that an attendee can learn about, and by reducing the fraction of students able to present their work.

Alongside the scientific program, the common location of a large cross-section of the Australian community continues to provide a unique forum to discuss professional issues beyond those directly related to science research. In recent years the increased activity of ASA Chapters has led to the running of a number of workshops and sessions during lunch-times and evenings of the ASM, highlighting issues including those related to career professional development, diversity and outreach. Similarly, the ASA has become an important vehicle in which to hold forums related to new scientific capability or development of strategies, and a time to hold national collaboration and committee meetings.

These ancillary meetings and events are fitted around the traditional scientific program, but arguably now form an equally important reason for many to attend the ASA. They have also grown alongside increased size and interest in ASA meetings. However it could be argued that the traditional motivations for the ASM are neither fulfilled by the current meeting structure, and do not capture the reasons for members attendance. It is therefore timely to consider the structure and role of the ASM in order to ensure that the ASM retains its preeminent place in Australian astronomy.

Alongside the structure, the traditional timing of the ASA ASM should be discussed. In keeping with the ASAs principles of inclusiveness, meetings in recent years have been held alternating between times that are inside of and outside of school holidays. At the same time, many astronomy sub-discipline meetings internationally are often held during the ASM period. On the other hand meeting times towards the beginning and end of the year clash with academic teaching and grant activities.

The ASM presents an opportunity to focus media attention on Australian astronomy. Future bids for the ASA could incorporate specific media strategies, including a professional media liaison.

Within this context the ASA Council will:

1) *Conduct a conversation with the ASA membership to determine an updated statement of purpose and focus for the ASA ASM*
2) *Investigate whether mid-year remains the optimal time in which to hold the ASM*
3) *Work with ASM organisers to utilise the potential of the ASM to showcase Australian Astronomy to the Australian public*

The Harley Wood School of Astronomy:

In conjunction with the Annual Scientific Meeting, the ASA sponsors the Harley Wood School of Astronomy for postgraduate students. The School usually involves 2 days of invited lectures and discussion centring around a specific theme. The atmosphere is informal, organised by students, and emphasises contact between students from all over Australia and their lecturers. The structure of the HWSA has not varied significantly in over 20 years.

In the past the HWSA was considered an extremely important event by PhD students nationally. In recent years (with the exception of 2018) interest in the HWSA has dropped off relative to the growth in PhD students. Anecdotally this appears to be due in part to very packed HWSA schedules directly followed by very packed ASM schedules, and in part to student perception that only one HWSA need be attended in order to get the professional development benefits. Additional cultural changes in recent years include the increased ease of networking via electronic media and networking opportunities provided for many students through national organisations including Centres of Excellence. While recognizing that the opportunities available to students in large universities and Centres of Excellence are not necessarily available to students studying at regional or smaller universities, the importance of extra opportunities for student networking that was a key benefit of HWSAs of the past may now be less widely applicable. Similarly, the increase in high-quality professional development offerings of ASA chapters and other astronomy organisations have partly replaced this traditional role of the HWSA.

The ASA should work with Australian astronomy students and their supervisors to consider the structure and role of the HWSA, including identifying the benefits that can be provided which are not otherwise available.

Within this context the ASA Council will:

1) *Conduct a conversation with ASA student members and supervisors regarding the HWSA schedule including balance of talks and networking*
2) *Identify the key gaps in student training and experience that can be filled by the HWSA and identify the students who would most benefit*
3) *Communicate these benefits to the ASA membership including students and supervisors.*

The ASA's Relationship with National Bodies:

Australian astronomy is governed by 3 peak bodies, the ASA, the National Committee for Astronomy (NCA), Astronomy Australia Limited (AAL), which perform complimentary roles.

The NCA is an Australian Academy of Science (AAS) Committee and is the peak body for development of strategy for investment in Australian astronomy infrastructure, education, and workforce. The NCA is the point of contact with Government on matters of national astronomy investment, and the interface for Australian astronomers to the international community. The NCA is responsible for co-ordinating development of the Decadal Plan for Australian Astronomy.

AAL is a not-for-profit company, whose members are the 15 Australian universities and research organisations with a significant astronomical research capability. The AAL Board is responsible for investment decisions governing expenditure of several Australian Government research infrastructure grants. The AAL Board provides advice to the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and Department of Education and Training, and constructs the investment plans for astronomy NCRIS allocations.

The ASA complements these strategic and infrastructure focussed bodies. As the national professional organization for astronomers, the ASA provides a community forum for Australian astronomers and represents their interests individually and collectively.

The ASA works closely with the NCA. The ASA president is a member of the NCA, and the NCA uses the ASA network to facilitate information gathering and discussion. In contrast, the AAL Board is elected by Australian university and observatory members and the ASA has no formal representation.

The ASA is a member of Science & Technology Australia (STA), which is Australia's peak body across science and technology. STA represents about 70,000 Australian scientists and technologists working across all scientific disciplines. The goal of STA is to be a respected and influential contributor to debate on public policy, and a lobby group with access to parliamentarians. The goals and values of STA are shared by the ASA.

Within this context the ASA Council has the following goal:

1) *As the professional body of a leading Australian science discipline the ASA should seek greater role in proposing and supporting STA initiatives*

The ASA's Relationship with the International Astronomical Union:

Many members of the ASA are also members of the International Astronomical Union (IAU). The NCA is the representative body for Australian astronomy to the IAU, and membership is funded through the resources of the Australian Academy of Science (AAS). In recent years the AAS has made representations through the NCA to Australian organisations, including the ASA to assist with this funding commitment. The ASA has much in common with the IAU whose individual members are professional astronomers from all over the world. The key activities of the IAU are the organization of scientific meetings and promotion of astronomical education, research and public outreach. The IAU promotes equitable opportunities for access to science and its benefits, and opposes discrimination based on any factors. Thus, it may be appropriate for the ASA to take a more active role in the affairs of the IAU, including national nomination of national representation at the IAU.

The ASA membership has in the past declined (through a vote) to pay IAU membership fees on an individual basis through a levy on ASA membership, citing the fact that ASA members may not wish to join the IAU and that IAU membership is a national rather than individual responsibility. However the ASA should consider whether the Society might provide a financial contribution to national membership fees, through avenues other than an individual membership fees levy which would provide the ASA with a position of influence in IAU activities, while leaving individual members to choose their IAU membership status.

Within this context the ASA Council will:

1) *Conduct a conversation with the Academy of Science regarding the benefits to Australian Astronomy of IAU membership, and the potential for ASA roles in IAU governance*
2) *Conduct a conversation with the ASA membership about an ASA contribution to IAU membership and role in IAU governance*

Prizes and recognition

The ASA sees the recognition and celebration of achievement in astronomy as a key activity and sponsors a number of awards for people contributing to astronomy at various levels. It also provides limited travel assistance for student members.

The ASA also recognises contributions to the promotion or extension of the knowledge of astronomy and contributions to the Society by conferring Honorary Fellowship of the Society.

The ASA prizes and awards have grown substantially over the past 10 years, and the society has achieved the goal of offering recognition covering astronomical and outreach activity and different cohorts of Australian astronomers. Current prizes include:

- The Bok Prize for outstanding research in astronomy by an Honours or eligible Masters student
- The Charlene Heisler Prize for the most outstanding PhD thesis in Astronomy or a closely related field
- The Louise Webster Prize for outstanding research by a scientist early in their post-doctoral career
- Anne Green Prize for outstanding research by a mid-career scientist
- The Ellery Lectureship for outstanding contributions in astronomy or related fields
- The Peter McGregor Prize in recognition of exceptional achievement or innovation in astronomical instrumentation
- The Berenice and Arthur Page Medal for excellence in amateur astronomy
- The David Allen Prize for exceptional achievement in astronomy communication
- Astronomy Student Achievement Awards for best talks and prizes at each ASM

The Society also provides limited student travel Assistance to student members to allow them to attend national and international conferences. ASA student travel assistance is a visible and valuable contribution, and consideration should be given to expansion of this assistance.

Many of the ASA's Prizes are funded through the ASA's Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy (FAA). The purposes of the FAA are very broadly defined to allow the support of prizes, scholarships, research and facilities. In 2018 council increased the prize money for the above awards, recognising that prize values had remained static for some years, and the growing esteem of the awards.

To maximise the positive benefits of the prize suite the ASA Council will:

1) *Encourage diversity among ASA prize recipients through identification of unconscious bias in eligibility or activity within the prize offerings*
2) *Actively seek to raise the level of applications from women and other underrepresented groups of ASA members*
3) *Encourage media coverage of ASA prizes to raise awareness of Australian astronomy achievements*
4) *Consider the size, allocation and number of student travel scholarships to ensure that travel funds are effective and applied where needed*

ASA Governance and Council

The business of the ASA is conducted by a Council elected via ballot (if necessary) of the members every two years. The Council also invites one student member, elected by the students every year, to attend meetings as an observer, to represent the interests of Australian postgraduate students at the meeting and report back to the student members. Significant ASA activity is undertaken by Chapters as described above and driven by their steering committees. The ASA Council values interaction between chapter steering committees and invites steering committee Chairs to meet with council annually.

With the exception of theoretical astrophysics which is advocated through ANITA, the ASA does not have a mechanism to facilitate communication among groupings of members with common astronomical interests. Consideration should be given to creation of additional scientific Chapters within the ASA. Scientific Chapters would enable the ASA to provide formal input into national scientific planning including through the Decadal Planning Process, to assist with planning of sessions at the ASM and hold specialist scientific meetings.

To address whether the ASA Council makeup and practice best serves the current society, Council will:

1) *Consider having Chapter chairs as observers of Council to recognise their increasing role in ASA activity*
2) *Undertake a conversation with the ASA membership to identify any gaps in member interest that should be addressed by a new Chapter, including instrumentation and space research*
3) *Undertake a conversation with the ASA membership regarding formation of scientific Chapters*
4) *Consider the frequency and format of Executive and/or Council meetings*

Communication

The ASA and Chapter web sites provide a primary source of information about ASA and Chapter activities. The structure and style of the ASA page have not been refreshed for some years, while each of the Chapters have web sites in their own styles and on different platforms. In 2019 the ASA web site will be relaunched following a redevelopment.

In conjunction with the revamp of the ASA web presence, an additional goal is the merging of existing Chapter sites into the new framework would more clearly articulate the total breadth of activity of the ASA. As part of the integration it may be advantageous to move from a static email approach to communication to a more active member forum or similar. Importantly, a web presence should be regularly maintained and encourage interaction. This requires effort from an individual or team.

The ASA Council will work with Chapters and the membership to:

1) *Outline the strategy for ASAs social media reach, including goals for social media messages within the membership and publicly*
2) *Investigate improved ASA member internal information through augmentation of email exploder with discussion or social media platforms*
3) *Move Chapter web sites onto the new ASA web platform*

ASA Finances

The ASA has more than 650 active members at various levels. The ASA held $345,367 in its accounts as at 31 March 2018. Over the past five years, annual income has averaged ~$113,000, comprising membership fees, sponsorship, account interest and PASA revenue. Annual expenditure over that period has averaged ~$78,000, and includes items such as student travel grants, grants to Chapters for activities, PASA editorial fees, sponsorship of meetings, audits, and book keeping. The average annual surplus over the past five years has been ~$35,000. Should the ASA Council wish to maintain our current balance, we could spend $35,000 per year on new ASA initiatives. Good governance requires that the ASA have sufficient funds to cover 1 year of operations including a potential deficit in the ASM budget. Therefore, there is room to invest more than $35,000 per year on strategic initiatives, while still maintaining healthy finances. At the time of writing the Foundation for Astronomy held sufficient funds to cover ASA prizes for the next 15 years, with ~$275,000 in the bank accounts.

In view of the healthy financial state of the Society, the ASA Council will determine the costs to implement its strategic plan, and will explore a model for increased executive support with the goal of more efficiently forwarding initiatives which are currently undertaken by volunteer Council members. Such a position would supplement the current funding of a book keeper who allows the ASA Treasurer to focus on policy initiatives. An ASA funded executive position could include administration management of the member database and general operations including the web page. Options to be explored include a fee-for-service contract or an external Secretariat.

The ASA Council will work to:

1) *Consider allocating larger annual budgets for ASA Chapters*
2) *Ensure that all funds used for their intended purpose, including funds for student travel to the HWSA and ASM*
3) *Determine the priorities for student travel funding, and whether student funding should be needs based*
4) *Discuss whether the ASA should pursue activities for additional income, including return from surplus for underwriting of meetings (e.g. an annual ASA focus meeting)*
5) *Determine the funds required to cover 12 months of operations*
6) *Consider a part-time or casual executive support to facilitate ASA initiatives*