

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Incorporated in the ACT

ABN 37 660 297 848

President's Report for 2020/2021

Wednesday 14th July 2021

1. Council 2020-2021

Cathryn Trott	President
John Lattanzio	Vice President
Stuart Wyithe	Immediate Past President
John O'Byrne	Secretary
Marc Duldig	Secretary
Yeshe Fenner	Treasurer
Elisabete da Cunha	Councillor
Krzysztof Bolejko	Councillor
Ilya Mandel	Councillor
Barbara Catinella	Councillor
Daniel Zucker	Councillor
Christopher Matthew	Student Representative
Stas Shabala	Chair, PASA Editorial Board
Tanya Hill (Co-opted)	Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator
Michael Brown (Co-opted)	Media and Outreach Co-ordinator

Many thanks to our outgoing Council members, who have added immensely to the Society over their terms; Ilya Mandel, Elisabete da Cunha, Krzysztof Bolejko, and Dan Zucker.

Krzysztof will continue on Council in the role of Acting Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator, while Tanya Hill is on leave.

Special thanks to Stu Wyithe, who will conclude his service to Council, having served as Vice-President, President and Immediate Past President, and for driving the current Strategic Plan. Also special thanks to Chris Matthew for serving two terms as the student representative.

I would like to thank all Council members for their contributions in the past year. Particular thanks go to Council members holding ongoing roles in the society (John O'Byrne, Marc Duldig, Stas Shabala, Tanya Hill, and Michael Brown). Thanks go also to Gary da Costa for continuing in his role as our "Public Officer", and to previous and new Chapter Chairs Daniel Price, Michael Fitzgerald, Manodeep Sinha, Dan Zucker, Ilya Mandel, Jackie Bondell, Nichole Barry, and Katie Jamieson. I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding work of Krzysztof Bolejko as Acting Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator, while Tanya Hill is on leave.

A special thanks to Deb Gooley who has been exemplary in her administrative role for the ASA, and our book-keeper Molly Lee.

2. Challenges

2021 has continued to be a challenging time for the community. The downstream effects of long-term closed borders and lack of international travel is now being clearly felt, with international student numbers drying up, and current HDR students struggling to undertake effective research. The ASA COVID funds have helped 22 students and ECRs over the past 12 months, providing a fall-back option for those unable to seek assistance from their institutions. We again will have a virtual ASM, but in 2021 we are better prepared for such a meeting, and the hub model with a partially in-person HWSA means that our meeting should be more collegial and effective than in 2020.

2. Highlights

Despite the challenges of the past year, there are clear highlights to note:

- Sustainability statement: ASA Council, with the support of the Sustainability Working Group, have drafted a statement of sustainability, which is now available on the main page of the Society website. This states our commitment to ASA events and endeavours being organised through the lens of sustainability. Thanks in particular to SWG co-Chairs, Themiya Nanayakkara and Clancy James for their work with Council
- COVID fund: this fund has now operated for more than one year, and has supported 22 students and ECRs with \$12,024.04 funding for a range of items, including virtual conference attendance, home office computing needs, data storage, and internet costs
- Pleiades Awards: the IDEA Chapter has worked very hard to incorporate feedback on the Pleiades process, and implemented several important changes to make the awards more relevant, fair and transparent. The success of the changes is evident in the 14 institutions and centres that received awards this year. Particular thanks to Dan Zucker and Katie Jamieson who have driven these changes
- Group for Astroparticle Physics (GAP): the AIP and ASA have both now formally approved the creation of a joint AIP-ASA group and its Charter, through the leadership of Gavin Rowell. This group will now form its first steering committee and will begin activities in earnest in the coming months. This joint communication between Societies paves the way for future cross-disciplinary interactions. Thanks to Gavin and Marc Duldig for working through the AIP and ASA paperwork and By-laws to bring this into

effect. Thanks also to Hayley Bignall, Clancy James and Yvonne Wong who made up the rest of the formation committee

- Establishment of the *Roy Allen Medal for Exceptional Service* to the Society, a new medal that will be awarded by the ASA President for long-standing and sustained service to the ASA. It is expected that this medal will be bestowed rarely. *The award is typically given for Society service over a period of 25 years or more, but ultimately it is awarded at the discretion of the President, Vice-President and Immediate Past President (except where one of these is the intended recipient).*

Roy Allen served for 31 years on ASA Council, including 16 years as Secretary.

Strategic Plan 2019-2022: During 2018, the ASA Council undertook a strategic planning exercise to understand the longer term goals of the Society, and to allow short term priorities to be placed in a broader strategic context. Following input from ASA Chapters through their steering committees as well as incorporation of feedback received from members, the Strategic Plan is based around the following 5 goals:

Goal 1) Enhance the ASA's role as the pre-eminent body representing Australian astronomers

Goal 2) Expand the scope of the reach and impact of ASA activities, and build on the ASA's role as a facilitator of Australian professional astronomy conversation and networking

Goal 3) Maintain the ASA's role as a leader in the promotion of diversity in science and in Australian astronomy in particular

Goal 4) Harness the positive impact of Australian astronomy through maximising the effectiveness of educational and outreach activities undertaken by members

Goal 5) Broaden the ASA's support for student training, with focus on equity of access to activities and opportunity for all Australian astronomy students

ASA Chapters have been active in advancing some of these goals, including the revised process for the Pleiades Awards (IDEA) to promote and lead diversity, EPOC's work to support and foster outreach, and ANITA's effective virtual meetings and schools for maximum inclusion.

ASA Council has been strongly-focussed on:

1. Initiatives to support students and ECRs during COVID. This includes encouraging and fostering virtual meetings, encouragement of training and workshops, and the COVID fund to provide financial support;
2. Promoting sustainability in the Society and the community. COVID's silver lining has been a rapid transition to online and hybrid meetings, and astronomy without travel. These have helped to advance the fledgling discussions about general sustainability for our professional community, and will have some lasting benefits for lower carbon-impact in our work.

Code of Conduct and Equity and Conduct Committee: It is the policy of the Astronomical Society of Australia (ASA) that all participants in its activities are able to enjoy an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, and that its members conduct themselves appropriately during all professional activities. As part of our ongoing commitment to this policy, during 2018/2019 the ASA Council revised the [ASA Code of Conduct](#) and [Statement of Ethics](#) documents. In particular, the revised Code of Conduct and Statement of Ethics makes it clear that ASA guidelines apply to all participants at ASA endorsed meetings or activities, and to ASA members at all astronomical meetings or activities.

During 2018/2019 the ASA Council also instituted a new process by which potential breaches of the Code of Conduct or Statement of Ethics can be reported. This process is outlined in the new document [Handling of Potential Breaches of the ASA Statement of Ethics and Code of Conduct](#). Council has also convened a new [Ethics and Conduct Committee \(ECC\)](#). The ECC is charged with oversight of the ASA Code of Conduct and Statement of Ethics as well as handling of potential breaches. A previous case concluded in 2020. During 2021, this committee did not deal with any breaches, which is an excellent outcome.

Awards and honours: Members of the ASA were recognized in several awards over the past 12 months:

Professor Lawrence Cram from the ANU was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Member in the General Division (AM)

Professor Lawrence Edward CRAM

For significant service to tertiary education, and to astronomy and astrophysics.

Lawrence has held significant research and policy leadership roles across CSIRO, The University of Sydney, the ARC, and the ANU, with a broad reach into astronomy, mathematics, engineering, and public policy.

Swinburne Professor and former ASA President Virginia Kilborn was appointed as Swinburne's inaugural Chief Scientist.

The first role of its kind in Australia's universities, the Chief Scientist will help to develop and direct the scientific strategy of the university, providing leadership internally and building relationships externally.

Virginia's broad experience in shaping Australia's astronomy strategy over many years will serve her well to take on this exciting role across a wider range of science. We wish her the best!

Professor Lisa Kewley from the ANU, was elected to the US National Academy of Sciences.

Lisa, who is Director of the ASTRO 3D Centre of Excellence, was one of 120 new members, including 59 women and 30 international members. Election to the NAS is "in recognition of ... distinguished and continuing achievements in original research." Lisa continues to be a research leader in her field, finding time for first-author original research while directing and driving ASTRO 3D.

Professor David McClelland

Received the 2020 Prime Minister's Prize for Science, for work leading to the first direct detection of a gravitational wave.

This prestigious award is recognition for the many years of dedicated work that led to this ground-breaking discovery, which continues to yield new discoveries and scientific advances for Australia.

Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith is the Women in STEM Ambassador to the Australian government, advocating for gender equity in STEM.

Meetings: A shortened ASA Annual Scientific Meeting was held virtually from July 7-8, 2020, including prize talks, the AGM and Chapter sessions. The SOC was Chaired by Barbara Catinella (ICRAR-UWA) and George Heald (CSIRO S&A), in place of their work to host the IAU APRIM meeting in 2020 in Perth. Barbara, George, and the other APRIM organisers contributed a large amount of work toward APRIM prior to its cancellation, and their contribution is acknowledged and appreciated despite the cancellation.

The meeting was run as a zoom webinar, with parallel sessions managed by two meeting rooms. Participants were able to move from one session to the next. There were 39 contributed talks, primarily from students (who were prioritised), and in excess of 150 participants in the zoom webinar for the talk sessions. Given the constrained format, and the community's lack of experience with good virtual platforms, there were no poster sessions.

The Harley Wood School of Astronomy (HWSA) was hosted online by ICRAR with Adam Watts Chairing. There were 114 participants, with attendees from Australia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, New Zealand, and Italy. This forum expanded the range of attendees considerably from a typical face-to-face school.

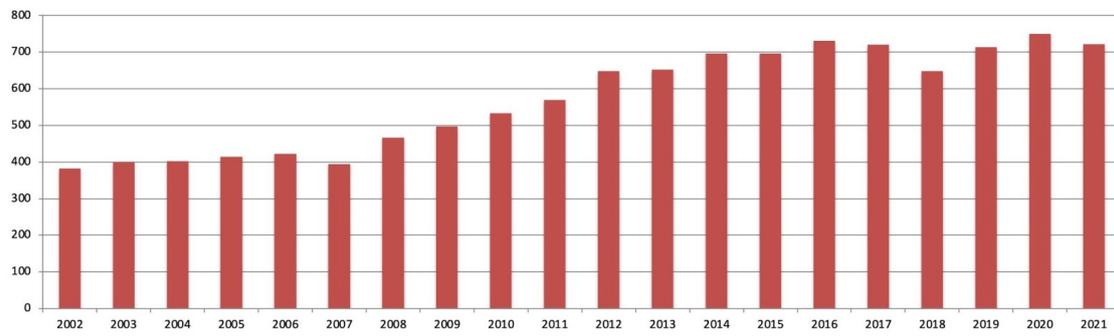
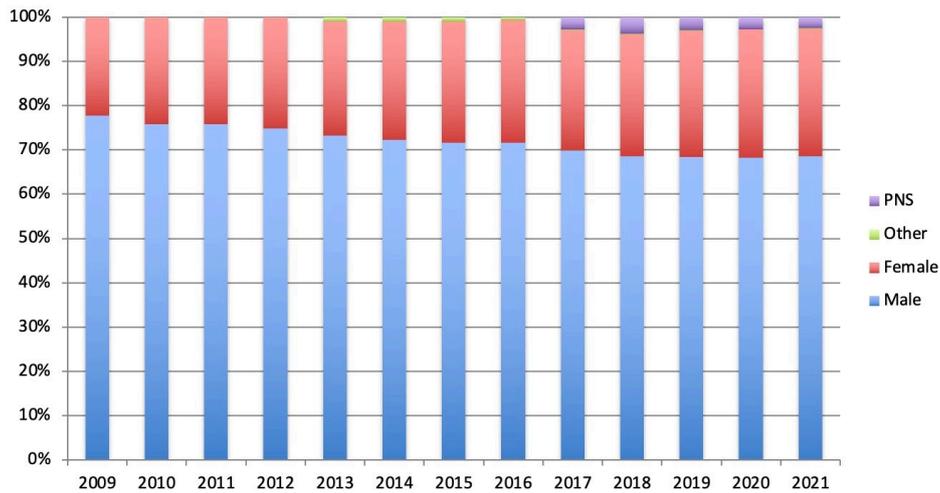
3. ASA events in 2020/2021

ANITA School and Workshop - February and June

ECR Chapter - Managing Your Career During a Pandemic Seminars and Panels

4. ASA membership

The ASA membership has reduced by 25 over the past 12 months. Membership numbers are now 722 - these are all classified as 'Active' - with 665 financial. The gender breakdown is 212 (F), 492 (M), 1 (Other), 17 (Prefer not to say - includes Corporates). The graphs below show the historical data. The membership numbers have stabilised recently.



Deaths:

Professor A.R. (Harry) Hyland. Harry pioneered the early days of mid-infrared astronomy in Australia using single-element bolometers, with studies of sources local to the Galaxy, in the local group, and beyond to QSOs. His most recent appointment was as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of James Cook University.

Harry served for 14 years on ASA Council and was a former President of the Society (1993-94). His service was recognised through an Honorary Fellowship of the ASA. He was also co-Chair of the National Organising Committee for the IAU GA in 2003 in Sydney.

5. Honorary Fellow

The ASA Council elected Professor Bryan Gaensler, from the Dunlap Institute in Canada, to Honorary Fellowship of the Society. Bryan is elected for his efforts to lead, promote and advance PASA, and his contributions to scientific excellence in Australia through CAASTRO and beyond. These contributions are widely recognised by members, and now by the Council through this Honorary Fellowship.

6. Financial

The ASA finances are in a healthy position, with an average surplus of around \$45,000 p.a. over the past five years.

As at March 31, 2021, the Society had net equity of \$511,005 compared with \$460,072 at the same time 12 months before.

Given the current financial situation of the Society, and COVID, ASA Council has agreed to again keep the membership fees frozen for 2021/2022.

Reduced expenditure due to few student travel grants and no Council travel, has been used for the ASA COVID fund, and we expect this situation to remain for the time being.

The Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy has \$49,566 in the operating account and \$216,065 in a term deposit. This charitable Foundation supports all the ASA Prizes. Donations are tax deductible.

ASA Council proposes to remove the fee for Corporate Members. This is due to the contributions that our corporate members make in the form of sponsorship for ASA events, and the small return they receive on that investment. As previously, new proposed corporate members will need to be approved by ASA Council to join.

7. Publications of the ASA (PASA)

PASA has experienced an increased volume of submissions, with overall quality remaining at a high level. The Impact Factor for 2020 is 5.57, an increase of 10%. PASA is continuing to attract high-quality submissions, including new thematic Collections from major Australian projects, high-quality white papers, and timely review articles.

The Editorial Board recommends a new PASA author name change policy, and clarification of journal scope in Instructions to Authors, and this has been approved by Council.

Editorial board: Two new Associate Editors (Minh Huynh, CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science) and Hermine Landt (Durham University) started in 2021. Dimitris Stamatellos (University of Central Lancashire) has accepted a position on the Editorial Board commencing January 2022. Other members of the Editorial Board are Daniel Price (Deputy Editor, Monash University), Katie Auchetti (University of Melbourne), Ivo Seitzzahl (UNSW Canberra) and Michele Trenti (University of Melbourne).

PASA performance

Submissions: 82 manuscripts were submitted from 1 Jan – 25 June 2021, up from 55 for the same period in 2020. This submission rate is also higher than previous years by 10-20%, suggesting that PASA is on track to publish more papers in 2021. Of 2020 manuscripts with decisions, 57% were rejected at some stage of the reviewing process (37% reject-inappropriate, 9% reject after review, 11% reject-resubmit). This rejection rate is broadly consistent with previous years: 50% (2020), 60% (2019), 45% (2018); and up from a few years ago (37% in 2017, 35% in 2016), reflecting the increase in the quality of work published by PASA, as described below. The increased number of submissions to PASA in the first half of 2021 is therefore of papers of broadly comparable quality to recent times.

Peer review process: PASA Associate Editors have been working hard on turnaround times. The median time to first decision for papers sent out for review was 33 days in 2020, and 32 days in 2021.

Impact Factor

The 2020 Impact Factor, covering papers published over the period 2018-2019 and cited in 2020, is 5.57. This puts PASA ahead of PASJ (5.02) and PASP (3.98), and now becoming comparable with the majors (MNRAS=5.36, ApJ=5.75, AJ=5.84, A&A=5.64), exceeding MNRAS. As reported at the 2020 ASA ASM, the 2019 IF (released on June 30, 2020) was at a then all-time high of 5.067, maintaining PASA in the top quartile of Journal Citation Reports-

listed journals, at number 14 of 68. I would like to thank and commend Editor-in-Chief Stas Shabala (University of Tasmania) for his excellent stewardship of PASA, and its continued success.

8. ASA Prizes and awards

The ASA Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator (acting) Krzysztof Bolejko, collates gender and geographical statistics for ASA prizes to ensure that there is a good balance. For the 2021 prizes, the gender statistics are shown in the table below.

	Bok Prize	Heisler Prize	Webster Prize	Green Prize
Total	13	11	5	7
% female nominations	46%	18%	80%	29%
% female short-list	33%	25%	66%	0%
Gender of winner	F	M	M	M

The small female fraction of Heisler nominations is an anomaly; typically the Heisler is well-balanced. ASA Council will discuss the assessment of the Green Prize, to ensure there is no undue bias on female applicants in the mid-career category. Certainly, this is the career stage where we observe a drop in the proportion of women in the field (mid-career and above).

The Society expects that female candidates should comprise at least 30% (increased from previous expectations of 20%) of the nominations for each prize and encourages institutions to help achieve this goal. The percentage of female nominations is variable because of the relatively small total number of applicants, but the statistics over recent years are as follows:

Prize	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Bok	46%	37.5%	61%	0%	29%	50%	83%	50%	0%
Heisler	18%	45%	38%	44%	43%	25%	40%	33%	25%
Webster	80%	50%	50%	100%	0%	0%	100%	33%	0%
Green	29%	40%	40%	50%	--	--	--	--	--

Many thanks to Krzysztof Bolejko for overseeing the awards, Tanya Hill's oversight of the process, and to the judges of the awards.

The following prizes have been awarded during the 2021 Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM):

Bok Prize - outstanding research in astronomy or a closely related field, by an Honours student or eligible Masters student at an Australian university.

Madeleine McKenzie - The University of Western Australia

Masters Dissertation: *Simulating the Formation of Multiple Stellar Populations in Globular Clusters*

Madeleine's project was based on simulations, which can be a difficult project to complete as not always simulations can render useful results. The fact that the project was at the intersection of observations and theory was considered as one of the factors contributing to the difficulty of the project, and thus making the successful outcome of this project even more impressive.

Honourable mention: Ethan Payne (Monash)

Charlene Heisler Prize - most outstanding PhD thesis in astronomy or a closely related field, accepted by an Australian university
Colm Talbot - Monash University

Doctoral Thesis: *Astrophysics of Binary Black Holes at the Dawn of Gravitational-Wave Astronomy*

Colm's research studied the origin of compact objects and their populations using GW signals. The thesis was marked as "Exceptional" and "Excellent" by the referees, and resulted in 4 first-author publications and 7 co-authored publications. Colm contributed to the code BILBY that is used by LIGO as well as outside the LIGO collaboration, and also contributed to teaching/outreach activities.

Louise Webster Prize - outstanding research by a scientist early in their postdoctoral career
Joseph Callingham (ASTRON; formerly University of Sydney)

"Anisotropic winds in a Wolf-Rayet binary identify a potential gamma-ray burst progenitor", Nature Astronomy, 3, 82 (2019)

Anne Green Prize - significant advance or accomplishment by a mid-career scientist
Keith Bannister - CASS

For pioneering work on Fast Radio Bursts (FRBs), impact in terms of success of ASKAP and successful implementation of the FRB search mode, and for opening a key new area having impact in high energy physics, galaxy evolution, the IGM and cosmology.

David Allen Prize - exceptional achievement in astronomy communication
Geraint Lewis - The University of Sydney

For the quality and content of a large number of speaking engagements, two books, positive impact, and tackling difficult scientific problems in an engaging and accessible manner.

The Robert Ellery Lectureship - outstanding contributions in astronomy or a related field

Tamara Davis - The University Queensland (2021)
Tamara will deliver her Ellery Lectureship at the 2022 ASM.

ASA Certificate of Commendation

David Luchetti, Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

In recognition of his long-standing support of the Australian astronomical community to advance the Square Kilometre Array project in Australia and support engagement with the European Southern Observatory.

A Certificate of Commendation is bestowed to members of the broader community who have made significant contributions to Australian astronomy, but are not eligible for normal ASA membership. David has served many roles within DISER to support and advance Australian astronomy, domestically to government and internationally to support the SKA project.

Awarded previously:

Berenice and Arthur Page Medal was awarded to TG Tan for his outstanding Perth Exoplanet Survey Telescope Observations. TG was presented with his award at a special colloquium, presentation and lunch held at ICRAR-Curtin in May 2021, in place of the cancelled National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers (NACAA) conference.

9. Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in Astronomy (IDEA) Chapter

Katie Jamieson is Chair of IDEA, which has 262 members.

a) Update of Pleiades Awards Process and Review of Pleiades Criteria

IDEA representatives spent July 2020 – September 2020 reviewing the Pleiades Awards process and criteria. They took into account feedback from Steering Committee members, as well as community feedback communicated to us by Cath Trott. As a result, the following modifications were made to the 2021 awards process:

1. Added outside oversight to the review process with a member of the STA Diversity & Equity Committee.
2. Created an official scoring scale and communicated averaged scores in the awards letters to applicants.
3. Added a rejoinder where the review panel requests answers to specific questions that remained after an initial review of the application. The applicants are given two weeks to submit a response. The final review and decision on award level is based off of the original application material and the rejoinder.
4. Created an “Instruction to Applicants” document (https://asa-idea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Pleiades_Instructions_2020.pdf) to clarify the intentions of the awards and how the criteria will be reviewed.
5. Include a full process report linked on our website (<https://asa-idea.org/2021-pleiades-awards-process-report/>).
6. Only publicly show the most recent Pleiades Award winners on the website, while keeping a private record of the history of awards from previous rounds.

There was no need to modify any of the existing award criteria.

b) IDEA Website refresh

The design and content of the ASA IDEA website(<https://asa-idea.org/>) were updated.

c) Statement on Black Lives Matter

In response to the global efforts surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement, the Steering Committee thought that it would be good to send out a statement in support of the movement and acknowledge the issues faced by Black and First Nations Australians. The statement was prepared with and endorsed by the ASA Council and with the assistance of Aunty Sue Peckham (Cultural Advisor, Indigenous Strategy, Macquarie University).

d) Creation of a Community Action Committee

The statement on BLM also included a call for Eols to join a new community action committee.

e) Pleiades Awards 2021

The Pleiades Awards applications were opened on 18 Sept. 2020 (announced through the ASA email list and on the website on 16 Sept. 2020). The process officially concluded when award letters were sent on 2 June 2021. The website has been updated with the 2021 award winners and they will be announced during the IDEA Chapter Town Hall at the 2021 ASM.

10. Education and Public Outreach Chapter (EPOC)

Jackie Bondell is Chair of EPOC, which has 215 members.

EPOC activities:

- Updated EPOC Goals to better align with strategic plan
- Prepared ASA EPOC pitch for committee members to use for Science Meets Parliament
- Promoted Astronomy-based National Science Week events through our networks
- Formed a partnership with P&O Cruises for members to serve as experts for eclipse cruises
- Liaised with Council to select and connect Eclipse cruise liaison
- Postponed planning on EPOC workshop until face-to-face meeting is an option
- Updated public resources on the EPOC website

11. Australian National Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics (ANITA)

Ilya Mandel is Chair of ANITA, which has 262 members.

The ANITA 2021 annual workshop was held over zoom due to the impossibility of face-to-face meetings. We met for two hours each on Mondays and Fridays over three weeks starting February 8, for a total of 12 hours. A total of 130 people registered to attend, and there were 41 talks from speakers representing more than 10 institutions. A small majority of talks (21 of 41) were given by students, and the overwhelming majority were by ECRs. We allocated 17 minutes to each talk (including questions and changeover). As a motivation for people to attend talks outside their normal field of interest, we interspersed talks from different fields and did not announce talk titles.

The ANITA 2021 summer school on "Green computing" is being held over three weeks in June, 2021, over zoom. We are meeting for 3 hours (plus a 30-minute break) once a week.

On the first day of the school, June 3, ADACS coordinator Greg Poole and ASTAC chair Bernhard Mueller provided an introduction to computing resources. Adam Stevens, lead author of the Nature Astronomy article "The imperative to reduce carbon emissions in astronomy", then gave a talk, followed by a panel discussion on the same topic with Adam, Vanessa Moss, Pascal Elahi and Natasha Hurley-Walker, moderated by Isobel Romero-Shaw. Over the next two school days, Paul Hancock and Rebecca Lange from ADACS are giving hands-on tutorials on profiling, optimisation, and related topics.

12. Early Career Research Chapter (ECR)

Nichole Barry is the Chair of the ECR Chapter, which has 285 members. The ECR Chapter curated a seven-part virtual series on how to manage a career during the pandemic with invited panellists from a range of backgrounds, career paths, and levels. This was held live on Zoom every week, where we had an average attendance of 66, or approximately one quarter of the ASA ECR Chapter. These sessions were recorded and edited for upload to our Youtube channel, which has generated over 250 views. The level of attendance and the timely nature of our virtual series indicates its success, and thus we will continue this form of connection and service in the future.

The seven parts were:

Job market for researchers in a pandemic

Maintaining mental health and productivity

Networking in Isolation

Career pathways: Jobs in Academia

Career pathways: Jobs in Data-Science

Career pathways: Jobs in Bio-informatics & Health Sciences

Career pathways: Jobs in Geoscience, Environmental Science, & Policy Analysis

13. Designated Observatories

The ASA has been requested by Standards Australia to maintain a list of *designated* optical observatories that are judged to be valuable resources for (i) research, (ii) education and (iii) community use. Acceptance as a designated observatory does not imply any form of legal status, but it should enhance a case for protection against obtrusive lighting. The new designated observatories approved in 2020-2021 are:

- Maleny Observatory - Brisbane Astronomical Society, Maleny - Queensland
- Eltham College Observatory - Victoria
- University of Adelaide Observatory - South Australia

The Standard AS4282 on The Control of the Obtrusive Effects of Outdoor Lighting was issued in October 1997 by Standards Australia and was updated in 2019. Fred Watson is currently representing the ASA in a further review of this Standard.

The list of Designated Observatories can be found at:

<https://asa.astronomy.org.au/membership/observatories/>

I encourage members to look at the breadth and depth of observatories supported by this initiative, and to see the quality of observatories in Australia.

14. Communications

The ASA email list remains the primary communication avenue for ASA news. Members can post directly to the list asa@mailman.sydney.edu.au.

This list is also used for Communications from the ASA Council to members regarding items of broad interest.

The ASA provided input into the Satellite constellations discussion in 2021.

In 2020, the ASA, along with several amateur astronomy societies, co-wrote a letter to Ministers Andrews (DISER) and Fletcher (Communications), and Dr Megan Clark (Australian Space Agency) voicing concern about the proliferation of mega-constellations of satellites, and their potential impact on professional and amateur astronomy in Australia. The letter, undersigned by 12 HoDs and amateur society Presidents, requested that astronomers be able to join a national and international dialogue to find solutions in this area that are of mutual scientific and commercial benefit.

Following that, the Australian Space Agency convened a roundtable discussion with the letter signatories, DISER, ACMA, and CSIRO to discuss the issue and paths forward. Included in that discussion were members of the Space Agency with expertise in regulation and legislation. The Space Agency has since undertaken discussions with their international counterparts, and with some of the major satellite companies, to discuss further, and this is an ongoing discussion. The astronomical community expressed its keenness to remain engaged in conversation with companies to find mutually-beneficial solutions.

Michael Brown is the ASA's media and outreach coordinator and oversees the ASA facebook and twitter accounts and provides general media advice to the society. The ASA twitter account (@AstroSocAus) has 1,545 followers (an increase of 200 on 12 months ago) and regularly tweets ASA and general astronomy news. This is an increase of 200 followers in the past year.

The ASA Events Calendar lists all ASA sponsored events as well as conferences, workshops and meetings that are open to broad Australian and international participation (see <https://asa.astronomy.org.au/events/calendar/>).

15. Science & Technology Australia

The ASA is a member of Science & Technology Australia (STA), which is Australia's peak body across science and technology. ASA members attended major STA events in the past year, including Science Meets Parliament, and have participated in STA programs such as Superstars of STEM, and STEM Ambassadors. In 2020/2021, STA has been engaging with National Reconciliation Week, particularly through member organisations Deadly Science and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance. Having established a lot of gains for women and LGBTIQA+ members of STEM organisations, STA has been working toward

avenues for greater indigenous participation. They are also running the annual survey on STEM remuneration, offering a crucial set of insights of the impact of COVID-19 on Australia's scientific workforce. Science Meets Parliament was run as an online activity, with city-based hubs for the east coast for the dinner. Feedback has suggested that this forum has been less effective than a typical face-to-face event.

16. National Committee for Astronomy

The NCA has been asked for input by the Academy on "International Survey of Science survey from the OECD Global Science Forum for 2021", "Consultation on emerging areas of research", "International Science Council is undertaking, in partnership with WHO and UNDRR, a high-level Covid-19 scenario assessment exercise", and an introduction to the expert working group for the NRI Roadmap.

A sub-committee of the NCA short-listed and proposed to the NCA new members for the committee. New members of the IAU were also approved by the NCA. The NCA was also made aware of Lisa Kewley's article "Closing the gender gap in the Australian astronomy workforce" (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-021-01341-z>).

17. Astronomy Australia Limited

AAL staff have been actively engaging in the NCRIS Roadmap process with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. This culminated in a presentation to the Roadmap Expert Working Group (EWG), on Friday 25 June 2021. The AAL CEO presented with Professor Brian Schmidt and Dr Sarah Pearce.

At the beginning of June, an agreement was signed by the European Southern Observatory (ESO) and representatives of an international consortium, led by the Astralis Instrumentation Consortium, to begin construction of the MAVIS instrument for use on ESO's Very Large Telescope (VLT).

AAL is doing more on industry engagement, directing increased staff effort towards developing a network of industry champions, and implementing a strategy focused on putting the best astronomy commercialisation and industry engagement cases into the broader business case for joining ESO as a full partner. To do this, AAL is working closely with the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER), and in particular with the Australian ESO Industry Liaison Officer.

18. Progress against 2020/2021 priorities

1. Implement components of Strategic Plan
 - ASA supported all Australia students to attend a hub for the 2021 ASM, allowing for free attendance at the meeting, including catering and the ability to interact with city-based colleagues
 - ASA Council broadened the scope of the ASA Travel Awards to include domestic travel, and can offer top-ups for students using sustainable travel options
 - ASA Council has discussed the availability of small amounts of seed funding for tools for virtual workshops and meetings.

2. Following the publication of the PASA history, decide on next direction for the ASA history project
 - This item is ongoing. The list of published papers on the history of the Society is available at <https://asa.astronomy.org.au/about-2/the-society-and-council/>
3. Web upgrade
 - The upgrade is complete

19. New Priorities for 2021/2022

In addition to any carry-forward priorities, Council has identified the following possible priorities to concentrate on for the next 12 months (**for discussion**):

- Seek links to Space Societies, building on the success of the formation of GAP
- Provide seed funding for exploration of effective tools for virtual/hybrid meetings
- Maximize benefit of the ASM to membership (seeking input through a survey)
- Undertake an audit of institutions against Bronze Pleiades award with a view to mentoring to meet this level
- Improve visibility and public awareness of ASA Prizes, through retention of Science in Public to work with prizewinners and their institutions for media releases
- Conduct a survey for the next Strategic Plan (2022-2024). The current Strategic Plan ends in <12 months, and the Executive will work with Chapter Chairs to form working groups for setting the agenda for the next Plan. In particular, we will be seeking firm recommendations for effective use of the Society's funds.

20. Harley Wood School of Astronomy and ASM/AGM 2022

The 2022 HWSA and ASM/AGM will be hosted by the University of Tasmania, Chaired by Dr Krzysztof Bolejko.

21. ASA Council for 2021/2022

John Lattanzio	President
Lisa Kewley	Vice President
Cathryn Trott	Immediate Past President
Yeshe Fenner	Treasurer
John O'Byrne	Secretary
Marc Duldig	Secretary
Michael Brown	Media and Outreach Co-ordinator

Stas Shabala	PASA editorial Board Chair
Tanya Hill	Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator (on leave)
Krzysztof Bolejko	Acting Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator
Matt Roth	Student Representative

Barbara Catinella	Councillor
Richard de Grijs	Councillor
Richard McDermid	Councillor
Bernhard Mueller	Councillor
Sarah Pearce	Councillor

22. Closing Remarks

The Society remains in a strong position from the perspective of membership, PASA, and finances. We continue to have a strong student contingent, and continuing to support them in their careers is important. The ASA has a role to play in the full student experience, including mental health, and the ASA Chapters are working well to provide that breadth.

For most members, the ASA is synonymous with the ASM/HWSA in July, and PASA. It is important that we continue to provide *the* forum for Australian astronomy to meet and confer, and a highly-competitive journal to publish results from Australian facilities.

The Society needs to remain relevant in 21st century astronomy, and we can play a leadership role in important activities such as sustainability, equity and diversity. Beyond those, continued diversification and connectivity with other disciplines is important, and the newly-formed Group for Astroparticle Physics (GAP, joint with AIP) and the plan to connect with space societies, aim to increase visibility and access for our members.

It has been a privilege to be Society President, and the ASA is in excellent hands with Professor John Lattanzio taking the reins.



Associate Professor Cathryn Trott

President