



# ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

*Incorporated in the ACT*  
ABN 37 660 297 848

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## President's Report for 2024/2025

Wednesday 9th July 2025

### **1. Council 2024-2025**

Stas Shabala	President
Richard McDermid (in 2024-25)	Vice President
Ashley Ruitter (in 2024)	Vice President
John Lattanzio	Immediate Past President
John O'Byrne	Secretary
Marc Duldig	Secretary
Yeshe Fenner	Treasurer
Christoph Federrath	Councillor
Bernhard Mueller	Councillor
Sarah Pearce	Councillor
Ivy Wong	Councillor
Richard McDermid (in 2024-25)	Councillor
Claudia Lagos (in 2025)	Councillor
Pradosh Barun Das	Student Representative
Ivo Seitzenzahl (in 2024)	Chair, PASA Editorial Board
Minh Huynh (in 2025)	Chair, PASA Editorial Board
Tanya Hill (Co-opted)	Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator
Vanessa Moss	Media and Outreach Co-ordinator

I would like to thank all Council members for their efforts over the past year in support of the Society. As usual, particular thanks are due to the Council members holding ongoing roles in the Society (John O'Byrne, Yeshe Fenner, Tanya Hill). I would also like to thank three colleagues who in recent months have left ASA leadership positions: our former Vice President Ashley Ruitter, PASA Editor-in-Chief Ivo Seitzenzahl, and long-serving chair of the EPOC Chapter Jackie Bondell.

My usual big thanks goes to Gary Da Costa for continuing in his role as our "Public Officer"; and to Deb Gooley who has continued to provide outstanding administrative support for the ASA.

Thanks also to our Chapter Chairs:

ANITA Chair: Fiona Panther

ECR Chair: Amit Seta

EPOC Chair: Jackie Bondell

GAP Co-Chair: Mark Krumholz (there is also an AIP Co-Chair: Martin White)

IDEA Chair: Devika Kamath

TDA Chair: Ben Montet

SWG Co-Chairs: Themiya Nanayakkara and Clancy James

CWG Chair: Vanessa Moss

EWG Co-Chair (with John Lattanzio): Terry Cuttle

Finally, I would like to highlight two exceptional individuals who are stepping back after literally decades of service to our community. Over 21 years, John Lattanzio has managed to fit in the roles of ASA President, Councillor over three separate epochs, and PASA Editor-in-Chief. Marc Duldig will complete 40 (!) years of service on Council – 38 of them as our Secretary – at this AGM. In true John and Marc style, they would not want any of us to make a fuss about their contributions, so naturally I would encourage all members positively impacted by their work to do exactly the opposite!

## **2. The year in review**

The past 12 months have provided many highlights, including:

- Survey of ASA membership. Completed in early 2025, this survey aims to gauge the views of ASA members on the Society, its activities and governance. Survey results will guide future activities and ways of working of the ASA. My thanks to all those who have provided input. As detailed below, several common themes have emerged in the preliminary analysis.
- Establishment of the Eclipse Working Group. Co-chaired by the indefatigable John Lattanzio and Terry Cuttle, the EWG was established to be a resource for the four total solar eclipses coming to Australia in the next few years. The initial focus is on the major eclipse in 2028 which will pass right over the Sydney metropolitan area.
- 2024 Annual Scientific Meeting. We ran our first-ever “online first” meeting. Led by Vanessa Moss, Clancy James and their teams across Australia, this ASM provides an alternative blueprint to face-to-face meetings. My thanks to those who filled in the post-meeting survey, the results of which will be used by ASA Council to determine the format of future ASMs.
- PASA remains an excellent publishing avenue for world-class astronomy research. Following the introduction of author changes at MNRAS, PASA is now the only fee-free option for the majority of astronomers at Australian institutions.

Much of the Society’s work is done by community members through the ASA Chapters and Working Groups. The summary of each Chapter’s work is below. Some highlights include:

- The ECR Chapter has continued its successful ECR symposium series. The Chapter has also secured additional funding from CSIRO towards the Software Development Prize; this complements the existing generous funding from the ARDC, and ensures that the monetary value of this prize matches other ASA awards. On longer timescales, the ECR Chapter worked with the NCA to organise a ECR-specific virtual Town Hall, ensuring that ECR voices were heard in the development of the Decadal Plan.
- The IDEA Chapter has once again run the biennial Pleiades awards, with the assessment panel including an experienced non-astronomer for the first time.
- The ANITA Chapter has delivered another excellent annual workshop and summer school, providing valuable development opportunities for theory-focused ECRs.
- The Education and Public Outreach Chapter contributed to the development of a new Astronomy careers guide, and is working closely with the Eclipse Working Group.
- The Group for Astroparticle Physics (GAP) held a session on “Synergies between particle and astrophysics in the hunt for dark matter” at the December AIP summer meeting.
- The Time Domain Astronomy chapter is going from strength to strength, increasing its membership by almost 40% and holding an “unconference” in September.
- The Eclipse Working Group, our newest, has already defined several workstreams related to engaging the public in the multiple upcoming solar eclipses over the next several years.

In addition to astronomers, the EWG has recruited numerous medical professionals to assist with safe viewing practises and crucially communicating this information effectively to the public.

- In June, ASA Council approved the establishment of a new Joint Group (with the Geological Society of Australia) on Stellar and Planetary astronomy.
- In July, Council approved the formation of a new History of Astronomy Chapter; the exact scope of this Chapter is still being refined, with a view of being as inclusive as possible – so watch this space.

As always, I encourage all members to consider getting involved in the work of ASA Chapters and Groups.

The year has not been without challenges. In this period of economic and geopolitical uncertainty, our mission to advocate for the importance of astronomy as a fundamental, enabling discipline is not always an easy one.

In September I represented the ASA at the Science and Technology Australia (STA) leadership dialogue. Comprising leadership representatives of STA member societies, at this event we discussed challenges and opportunities in the national research landscape, and issues on which STA and member organisations should focus in the lead up to the 2025 Federal election. I advocated strongly for the importance of discovery research, and was pleased to find a strong ally in our cognate society the Australian Institute of Physics. Earlier this year, the ASA made a submission highlighting the importance of discovery research to the review of the National Competitive Grants Program, which includes the ARC. We also emphasised the importance of opportunities and stable career paths for early and mid-career researchers.

On a brighter note, my biggest professional highlight of the past 12 months was seeing the level of engagement by so many members of our community in the new Decadal Plan. It was fabulous to see astronomy professionals from so many different backgrounds, career stages and locations come together to provide input into this important document. While the Decadal Plan is of course led by the National Committee for Astronomy, the experience made me proud of the role ASA and its members have played in the Plan's development. Thank you to all those who contributed – and if you haven't, I would strongly encourage you to consider getting involved when the next opportunity comes along.

### **3. Code of Conduct and Equity and Conduct Committee**

It is the policy of the ASA that all participants in its activities enjoy an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, and that its members conduct themselves appropriately during all professional activities. Council has previously convened an 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. There have been no new investigations required by the ECC in the last 12 months.

### **4. Awards and Honours**

Members of the ASA were recognized with awards over the past 12 months:

- Professor Tamara Davis, from the University of Queensland, has been elected as a member of the Australian Academy of Science. The Academy citation notes that Tamara has *“led efforts to make robust measurements of the homogeneity-scale of the Universe, invent a new way of measuring galactic distances, put upper-limits on the mass of the neutrino, and measure time-dilation in distant supernovae”*.
- Professor Matthew Bailes, who was awarded the 2024 Prime Minister's Prize for Science for his discoveries relating to Fast Radio Bursts, and his leadership in this field.
- Rebecca Davies was named as one of the latest astronomy Superstars of STEM.

Congratulations to all recipients.

## 5. Honorary Fellow

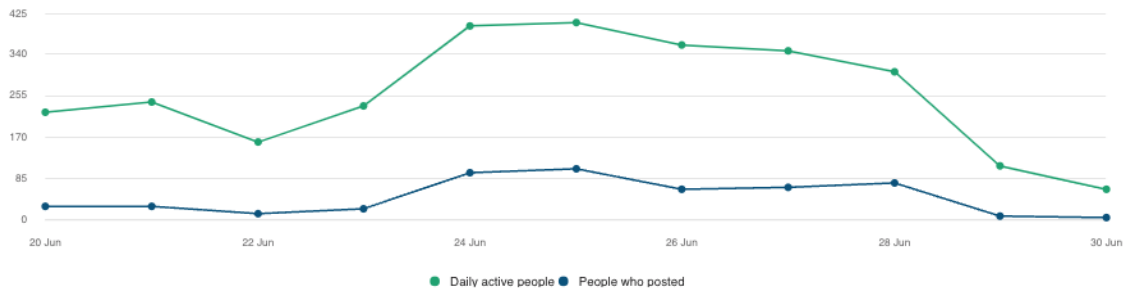
The ASA Council elected Andrew Hopkins, from Macquarie University, to Honorary Fellowship of the Society. Andrew has made major contributions to studies of the cosmic evolution of galaxies, including leadership of optical and radio surveys. He has also contributed heavily to our community through the ASA, with seven years on Council including a stint as President, and currently as Deputy Editor-in-Chief of PASA. Congratulations to Andrew.

## 6. ASA Meetings

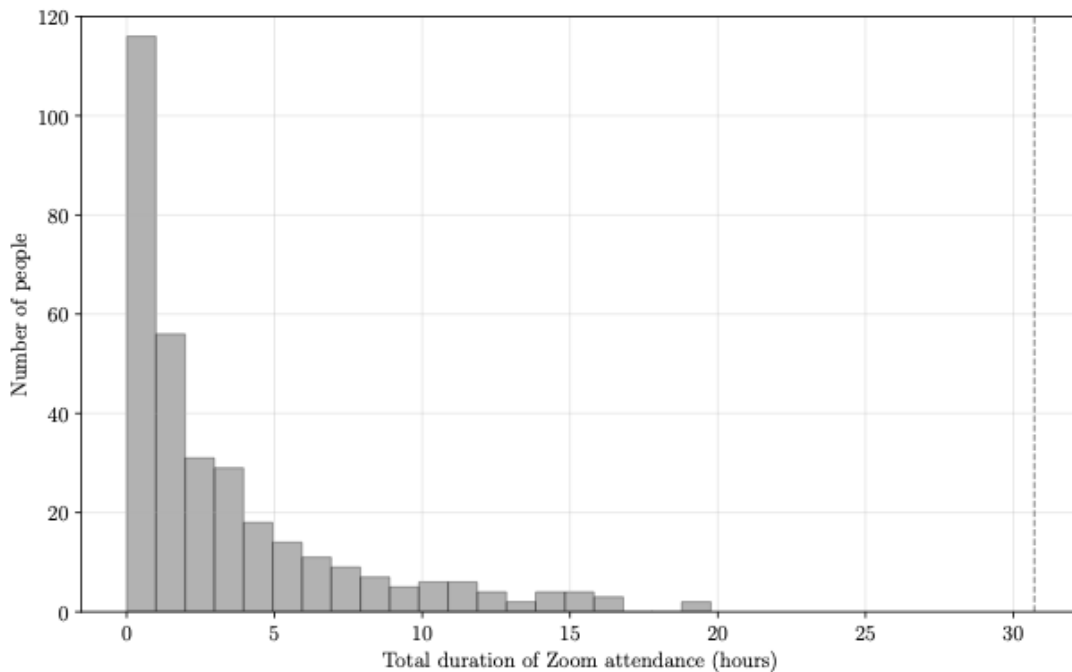
**The Annual Scientific Meeting:** The 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), held on 24-28 June 2024, was our first ever “online first” meeting. The format of virtual participation with a hub day in the middle of the conference week was novel for our community and seemed to work well while also giving an opportunity to participate to all those who would not be able to travel to an in-person meeting. My thanks again to Vanessa Moss, Clancy James and their teams across Australia for all the hard work – much of it unseen – behind the scenes to make this a success. The National Organising Committee (NOC) were able to manage all aspects of the conference making use of available technology platforms, which eliminated the need for external conference organising support and in turn resulted in significant cost savings, leading to much lower registration fees than at typical in-person ASMs. 273 participants from 29 institutions across Australia and New Zealand registered for the meeting. A portion of the budget was allocated to support community access to the conference via technology grants.

The online nature of the meeting allowed participant engagement to be monitored. Several channels were used:

- **Slack.** Over the period of 20-30 June 2024, the Slack had 542 active members, with a peak of 405 active members on 25 June 2024. These numbers are likely an upper limit on the true number of participants due to the way Slack measures activity, as indicated by Slack analytics below.



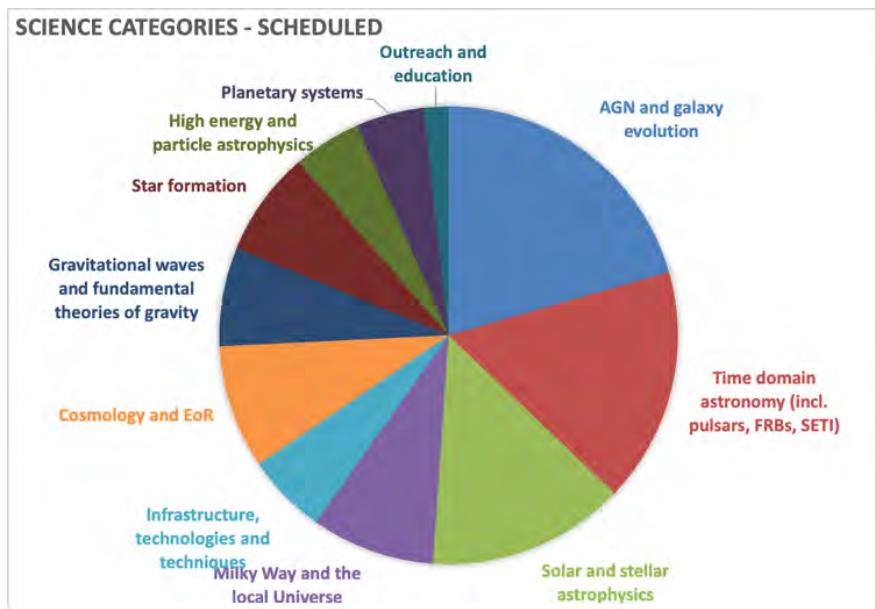
- **Zoom.** This was the most popular mode of attendance live, usually having more attendees than the sum of YouTube and Spatial combined. The mean attendance in hours in Zoom across all meetings associated with ASA2024 was 3.4 hr, with a minimum of 0.02 hr and a maximum of 19.8 hr. The total possible duration of attendance of live content via Zoom was 30.7 hr, and the closest attendee percentage of this was 64%.



- **YouTube** served as a way to passively attend the meeting, for those who wanted to just watch the talks rather than actively participate. Approximately 50 viewers per live session used YouTube.
- **Spatial** attendance was generally lower than either of Zoom or YouTube, likely due to the comparable unfamiliarity of the platform for users. No detailed attendance statistics are available for this platform.

The Hub Day was attended by 320 people, with a small number of attendees taking part online-only. The hubs attracted 118 participants in Perth, 66 in Sydney, 70 in Melbourne, and 26 in Hobart.

The ASM consisted of 10 review talks, 44 standard talks, 87 poster sparklers and six prize talks.



Prizes for student presentations at the ASM were awarded as follows.

Best student sparkler:

- 1st: Antonia Fernández-Figueroa (Swinburne)
- 2nd: Abbe Whitford (UQ)

- 3rd: Amrita Banerjee (Swinburne)

Best student poster:

- 1st: Cassidy Mihalenko (UTas)
- 2nd: Antonia Fernández-Figueroa (Swinburne)
- 3rd: Simon Ho (ANU)
- Highly commended: Antonia Fernández-Figueroa (Swinburne)

Best student talk:

- 1st: Louisa Canepa (UNSW)
- 2nd: Katy Proctor (UWA)
- 3rd: Tyrone O'Doherty (Curtin)

In addition to science sessions, the ASM featured the ASA Prize Talks; ASA Chapter meetings; Town Halls; and sessions on the Decadal Plan and industry engagement. Training opportunities included early and late sessions on ADACS, climate change, and ECR careers.

The Harley Wood lecture took place on 24 June and was delivered by Prof David Blair on the topic “The Power of Prediction”, discussing the story of gravitational wave research. 150 people attended the lecture in person, and the event was broadcast over zoom. A highlight was the number of young children in attendance - approximately 12 of primary-school age, four of whom asked questions from the audience. Afterwards, the Einstein First group put on some great demonstrations.

The organisers ran a post-ASM survey to gauge the perception of the very first online-first ASM. There was generally positive feedback on established virtual platforms such as Zoom (69% positive response); less familiar platforms such as Spatial received lower (41%) approval. Of the 101 attendees who filled in the survey, a preference emerged for in-person first meetings. The answer to the question “do you agree with the decision to hold the meeting as an online-first conference” garnered 52% disagree or strongly disagree responses, 25% neutral, and 21% agree or strongly agree. Free-form feedback showed a diversity of views on both the question of in-person compared to virtual conferences: some responses highlighting benefits to those who would not be able to attend an in-person ASM for a variety of reasons, the reduced carbon footprint and costs; while others emphasised the value of in-person interactions. In a separate question, respondents ranked networking opportunities as the most important additional aspect of the ASM (65% or responses judged this as very important). Many responses felt that the lack of real-time questions (which were facilitated through Slack) detracted from the community feeling of the ASM. All this feedback is very valuable to decisions around the structure of future ASMs.

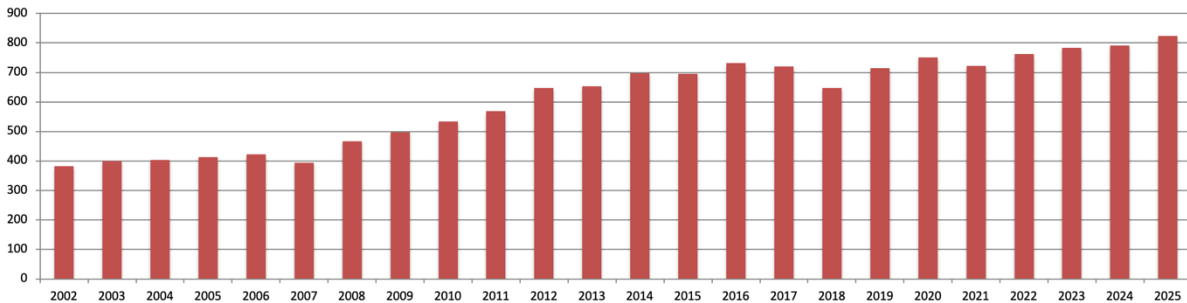
A big thanks to Vanessa Moss, Clancy James, and all those who contribute to the National Organising Committee for their bravery, dedication and ingenuity in organising this first-of-a-kind meeting.

**The Harley Wood School of Astronomy (HWSA)** was held at Long Point Conference Centre (NSW), on June 14-17, 2024. The theme was “Bigger than Big: Across all Scales in Science and Technology”, with 11 invited speakers covering topics including Across all Wavelengths, Big Surveys, and Big Data. The science sessions were complemented by workshops focusing on career strategising and thinking beyond PhD, mental health, invisible diversity & disability, and proposal writing. 35 participants attended the HWSA in person, with three online-only attendees. While the meeting was a success, organisers reported several challenges associated with running an in-person HWSA attached to an online-first ASM, including student funding (it is more difficult to find travel funding for the HWSA without the further benefits of the ASM); and finding a host institution. My thanks to the HWSA Organising Committee volunteers from the ASA ECR Chapter, headed by co-Chairs Ashna Gulati and Lydia Haacke; and the University of Sydney for being the HWSA host institution.

## **7. ASA membership**

The ASA membership has increased slightly over the past 12 months. Membership numbers are now 824 (compared to 791 in mid-2024) - these are all classified as current members but 138 have payments overdue, of whom 70 are 18 months overdue (and will be removed shortly if they remain unfinancial). These numbers are disappointing given several attempts to contact late payers, but not too different to previous years.

**ASA Membership**  
(excl. Alumni)



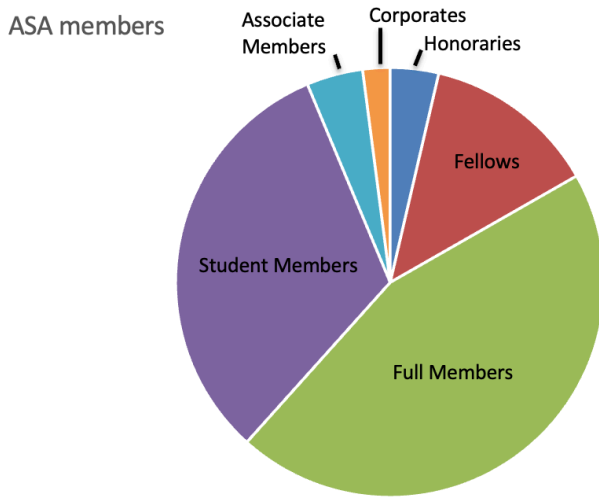
One reason for being overdue is students who complete their degrees but never tell us what comes next. For some that will be outside astronomy. Council (and the ECR Chapter) would be interested to know about the subsequent careers of anyone who leaves astronomy, students or others, and Alumni status (which is free) was created to stay in touch with them. We hope to use alumni stories to better describe possible career paths for astronomers.

We currently have 50 Alumni, but they are *not* included in the membership count.

On the other hand, the numbers *do* include 17 Corporate members after an effort to get all relevant organisations to sign up for free Corporate membership. There are still several obvious omissions from this list. I encourage all astronomy-active groups to consider Corporate membership of the ASA.

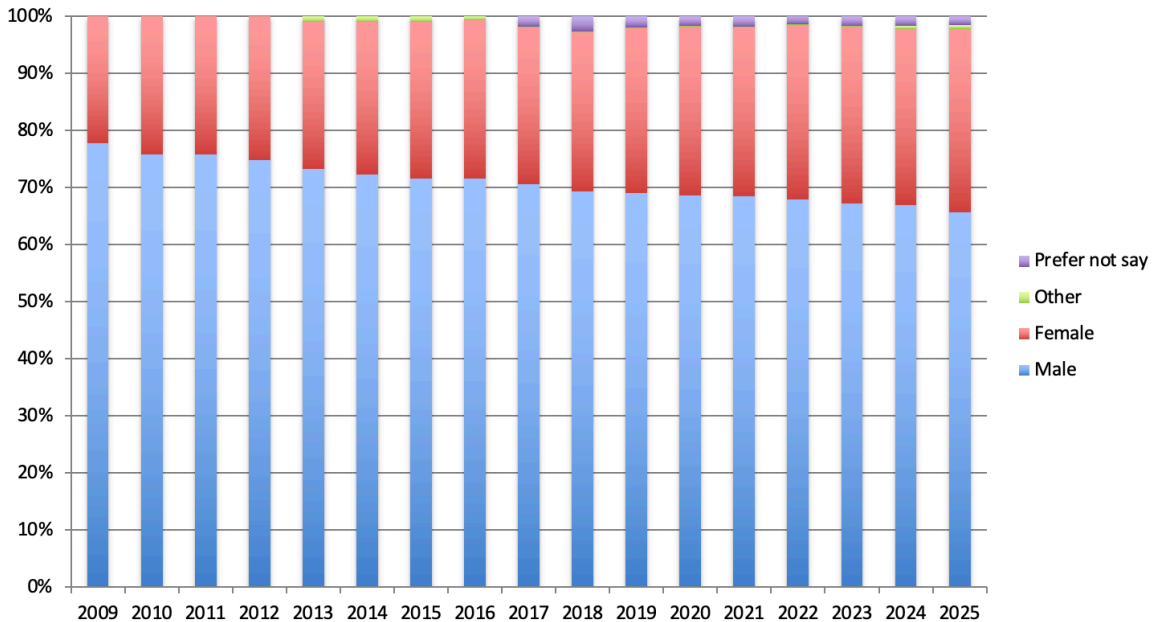
The gender breakdown of individual members is 259 (Female), 530 (Male), 4 (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified), 14 (Prefer not to say). A Table with more details is included below.

	Male	Female	Other	Prefer not to say	Not relevant	Total	Male %	Female %
Honorary Fellow	20	6				26	77	23
Honorary Associate	4					4	100	0
Fellow	53	17		1		71	75	24
Fellow - International	8	2	1	2		13	62	15
Fellow - Retired	22	2				24	92	8
Full Member	180	95	1	8		284	63	33
Full Member - International	42	21				63	67	33
Full Member - Retired	21	2				23	91	9
Student Member	157	103	2	2		264	59	39
Associate Member	23	11		1		35	66	31
<b>Total (individuals)</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>32.1</b>
Associate Society						0		
Corporate Member					17	17		
<b>Total</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>824</b>		
<i>Alumni status</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>11</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>50</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>22</i>



The graphs below show the historical data. The percentage of female members has climbed slightly to just over 32%.

### ASA personal memberships by gender



We note with sadness the passing of three ASA members since the last AGM. David Crawford was a prominent and long-standing member of the astrophysics group at the University of Sydney specialising in radio astronomy and cosmology; he was also an ASA member for over 50 years. Denis Coates was a member of the Monash physics department from its inception, and instrumental in establishing the Mt Burnett Observatory; he maintained membership of the ASA well into his retirement. Don Mathewson was the first Australian Director of Mt Stromlo; he was a foundation member of the ASA, served on the ASA Council from 1976-1982, and was President in 1979-1980.

### **8. Financial**

The ASA finances remain in a healthy position. Our current equity in our operating accounts of approximately \$580K corresponds to over four years of operating expenses.

In 2024/25, membership fees generated 42% of our overall income, PASA income was 40% of our income, with the rest coming from bank interest earnings and a surplus from a past ASA ASM. Our net surplus for the year was approximately \$30K, which is comparable to our average surplus in recent years.

Given the healthy financial situation of the Society, the Council has decided to again keep the membership fees frozen for 2025/2026. There may need to be a standard increase in line with CPI in subsequent years, to enable implementation of new initiatives highlighted by the members in the membership survey.

The ASA Council voted to waive membership fees for members with 50 or more continuous years' standing. This has resulted in an amendment to By-Law Section A. A10 is an addition to put into effect the Council decision. A5 is amended to reflect the technicality of adding the just over 50 members to those that do not require membership renewal notices and to remove the Treasurer as the notice sender.

The Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy has equity of ~\$235K as of 31 Mar 2025 and a deficit of ~\$13K for the 2024/25 year. This charitable Foundation supports all the ASA Prizes. Donations are tax deductible.

## **9. Publications of the ASA (PASA)**

PASA has continued to see an increased volume of submissions, with 265 original submissions in 2024 being approximately double the number typical of recent years; the situation is similar so far in 2025. The increased load associated with initial screening of papers is now being split between the Editor-in-Chief and their Deputy. The quality of submitted articles remains high. PASA's 2024 Impact Factor of 4.6 represents a slight increase of 0.1 over 2023, and only slightly below MNRAS, ApJ, AJ, and A&A (albeit with a lower volume of papers). The substantial decrease in impact factor between 2022 and 2023 is largely mirrored across other journals and is related to changes in the methodology used to calculate the IF. The number of full text downloads has almost doubled in Q1 2025 compared to the same time last year, suggesting an increase in the reach of the journal.

PASA has deployed a new Overleaf template in the first half of 2025. A PASA Letters section was introduced in May 2025, following a perceived community demand for rapid peer review of work which is likely to deliver high immediate impact in the literature. A PASA Bluesky account has been created, @pasajournal.bsky.social

We remind members that all PASA reviewers are eligible for a 30% discount on Cambridge University Press books.

## **10. ASA Prizes and awards**

The following prizes have been awarded during the 2025 Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM).

### **Bok Prize for outstanding research in astronomy by an Honours or eligible Masters student**

Awarded to Li Yusen (ANU) for his thesis "Orbital dynamics in barred Milky Way: the dynamical and chemical origin of the Hercules stream".

### **Charlene Heisler Prize for the most outstanding PhD thesis in astronomy**

Awarded to Dr Matthew Miles (Swinburne, now at Vanderbilt University, USA) for his thesis "Millisecond pulsar timing and gravitational wave searches with the MeerKAT radio telescope".

### **Louise Webster Prize for outstanding research by a scientist early in their post-doctoral career**

Awarded to Dr Rebecca Davies (Swinburne) for her paper "JWST reveals widespread AGN-driven neutral gas outflows in massive  $z \sim 2$  galaxies", 2024, MNRAS, 528, 4976.

### **Anne Green Prize for outstanding research by a mid-career researcher**

Awarded to A/Prof Claudia Lagos for her work on modelling the formation of galaxies, specifically the open source SHARK semi-analytic model which has led to breakthroughs in our understanding of the complex physics that governs galaxy formation and evolution.

**Emerging Leaders in Astronomy Software Development Prize (sponsored by the Australian Research Data Commons)**

Awarded to Dr Joshua Preston Pritchard (CSIRO) for development of Dstools, a processing pipeline package for radio interferometric data from ATCA, ASKAP, MeerKAT and VLA.

**Ellery Lectureship**

Awarded to Prof Naomi McClure-Griffiths (ANU) in recognition of outstanding and continuing contributions to the study of the evolution of the Milky Way Galaxy and its neighbours, the Magellanic Clouds. Due to scheduling constraints, Prof McClure-Griffiths will deliver the Ellery Lecture at the 2026 ASM.

The ASA has again engaged *Science in Public* to help promote the ASM and the Prizes.

The ASA Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator Tanya Hill collates gender and geographical statistics for ASA prizes to ensure that there is a good balance. For the 2025 prizes, the gender statistics are shown in the table below.

	Bok Prize	Heisler Prize	Webster Prize	Green Prize	Software
Total nominations	13	9	6	6	4
% female nominations	38%	56%	50%	83%	0%
% female short-list	40%	60%	50%	100%	0%
Gender of winner	M	M	F	F	M

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. This figure matches the percentage of female members in the ASA. 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	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Bok	38%	60%	18%	67%	46%	37.5%	61%	0%	29%	50%	83%
Heisler	56%	11%	38%	42%	18%	45%	38%	44%	43%	25%	40%
Webster	50%	25%	50%	50%	80%	50%	50%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Green	83%	33%	29%	33%	29%	40%	40%	50%	--	--	--

Software	0%	50%	25%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
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*Percentage of Female Applicants: female membership of the ASA is 30%*

Many thanks to Tanya Hill for her oversight of the process, and to all of the judges of the awards.

I would like to remind members that the ASA has a mechanism to recognise outstanding service (as opposed to research) contributions to astronomy, via a certificate of recognition. These are not awarded regularly, instead being reserved only for outstanding contributions. The Council encourages nominations of suitable non-astronomers from the membership – please get in touch with me or any other Council member if you have a worthy contributor in mind.

### **11. Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in Astronomy (IDEA) Chapter**

The IDEA Chapter has 272 members, and is chaired by Devika Kamath. The Chapter members identify as 55% female, 43% male, and 2% other/unspecified. The Chapter steering committee is well represented across all states and territories with active astronomy groups, and also includes international members; my thanks to those members of the steering committee who have put themselves forward to make this possible.

The Chapter's main work over the past year has been the biennial Pleiades Awards, with outcomes announced at this year's ASM. This is a significant undertaking by all involved, both the submitting institutions and the assessment panel. My thanks to all who contributed. For the first time, the assessment process included an experienced external (non-astronomy) reviewer with extensive expertise in STEM equity in Australia. The IDEA chapter plans a review of the Pleiades process following community feedback in the next 12 months.

### **12. Education and Public Outreach Chapter (EPOC)**

The EPOC chapter has 236 members, including 80 student members. The geographical distribution of Chapter membership closely follows ASA membership; there are 24 international Chapter members. Chapter members identify as 59% male, 37% female, 6% prefer not to say (PNTS), 1% indeterminate/intersex/unspecified. I would like to thank Jackie Bondell for her tireless leadership of EPOC over many years, and welcome Fred Watson to the Chair's role.

EPOC contributed to the development of an Astronomy Careers brochure, led by the ASTRO3D Centre of Excellence in consultation with OzGrav. This brochure was first shared at the July 2024 CONASTA teachers conference, and has since been shared with state-level science teacher organisations, and distributed as a hard copy at various state level science teacher programs and in digital form to state education departments. It will be shared again at CONASTA 2026. The new members of the committee provided some additional feedback to increase the accessibility features of the existing document, and the Chapter will look into whether those can be implemented before linking it to the ASA website. Other potential distribution channels include career counsellor workshops, science museums, and education organisations. It will also be shared with ASA members as a resource to link at school talks.

A major focus for EPOC over the next three years will be the total solar eclipse of 22 July 2028. Following the 2025 ASA ASM, Fred Watson will take over from John Lattanzio as co-chair of the Eclipse Working Group alongside Terry Cuttle. Aligning EPOC with the education and outreach priorities outlined in the new Decadal Plan will also be a priority. The Chapter is also investigating ways in which EPOC activities can support current work on the future of Australian optical astronomy post-ESO strategic partnership; raising public awareness in Australia is an important part of this. EPOC plans to initiate a simple online form where ASA members can enter outreach or communication events in which they are involved, the aim being to autogenerate a public table to demonstrate how much activity there is in this area. It will assist in facilitating EPOC's important role

in connecting people (especially students) who are keen to get involved in outreach but aren't sure how to get started or where to go.

### **13. Australian National Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics (ANITA)**

Fiona Panther is Chair of ANITA, which has 240 members (66% male, 31% female, 3% other or unspecified). Students comprise 49% of members.

ANITA's main activities were the 2025 workshop and ANITA summer school, held at the Australian National University in February. A big thanks goes to Mark Krumholz for generously providing funding support for most students to attend these events, as well as the broader ANU team for coordinating these activities.

Around 30 talks were shared over the three days of the workshop, and as usual talks for ECRs were prioritized. Congratulations to Jack Nibbs (Macquarie) who was awarded the 2025 J-P Macquart prize for the best student talk, as well as to runners up Amrita Banerjee (Swinburne) and Sophie Young (UTAS). Thanks to DMPP for the generous sponsorship of the student prizes. Well done to all students who presented: the quality of student talks seems to improve each year, both in the quality of work they produce and their ability to clearly communicate results. A post-workshop exit survey received mostly positive feedback, with a number of constructive comments regarding how engaging the interactive parts of the school were this year. These will be useful to the committee in organizing next year's meeting.

The summer school on computational multiphysics hydrodynamics was held immediately before the workshop, with approximately 30 attendees. Thanks to Daniel Price (Monash), Christoph Federrath (ANU), Lucia Armillotta (Arcetri Observatory) and Ben Wibking (Michigan State University) for expert lectures, and support from ADACS and the OzStar supercomputing team.

The next ANITA workshop and school will be held at the University of Western Australia in February 2026, with the school focusing on "Fundamental of numerical computing".

### **14. Early Career Research Chapter (ECR)**

The ECR Chapter, chaired by Amit Seta, has 334 members, comprising 58% male, 40% female, 2% X/PNTS members. There are Chapter members in all states and the ACT, as well as 34 international members.

Over the past 12 months the ECR Chapter has continued existing initiatives, including the ECR symposium series which enable ECRs to visit astronomical institutions around Australia, and maintaining the "Astronomers in industry" list.

The ECR Chapter has secured sponsorship from the CSIRO for the Emerging Leaders in Software Development Prize, increasing the monetary value of the prize to \$2500. The Chapter is also developing a new online "History and Mystery" series to discuss aspects of astronomy research that are difficult to include in a conventional scientific talk. The "History and Mystery" series talks are expected to commence in the second half of 2025.

### **15. Group for Astroparticle Physics (GAP)**

The GAP, shared between the ASA and the Australian Institute of Physics (AIP), is co-chaired by Mark Krumholz. The co-Chair from the AIP is Martin White. The Group has 97 ASA members, a small increase of 3% from last year. Note that AIP members are not included in this number. There is representation from every major astronomy institution in Australia. Among astronomers, membership is approximately 15% senior (fellows and retired), 35% members, 45% students, and 5% associate members (which includes internationals). Gender breakdown is close to even among the students, but dominated by male astronomers at senior levels.

GAP hosted a special session at the AIP conference in Melbourne in December 2024, focusing on synergies between astrophysical and particle physics probes of dark matter. It also successfully

nominated Tamara Davis as a plenary speaker to the AIP. GAP will host a similar session at the next AIP congress.

More broadly, GAP has been involved in organising the community behind the DarkMaps Centre of Excellence proposal, which focuses on particle and astrophysics synergies in the search for dark matter. This proposal has advanced to the final stage of the current CoE round.

GAP maintains a website at [https://www.aip.org.au/Group-for-Astroparticle-Physics-\(GAP\)](https://www.aip.org.au/Group-for-Astroparticle-Physics-(GAP)).

## **16. Time Domain Astronomy (TDA) Chapter**

The TDA Chapter, chaired by Ben Montet, has 117 members, representing a 38% increase on last year. 38% of members self-reported as female, 59% as male and 3% other/PNTS. The chapter has members in every state. There is a broad scientific diversity of interests, with some regionalism following the spread of Australian astronomy (i.e. many members from WA are interested in radio astronomy, while many in Sydney are interested in asteroseismology). There are large numbers of participants from Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth, but other university cities are represented. International members are located in the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, Saudi Arabia, the US Virgin Islands, and the United States.

Since the last ASA meeting, the Chapter's primary focus has been on community development, building opportunities for people who would normally not interact to meet and discuss science, and to provide chances to increase the visibility of the HDR and ECRs in our community. Beyond the usual ASA Town Hall meeting, TDA held an "unconference" hack week at UNSW in late 2024 to get people together to work on new projects and develop new collaborations. This led to multiple new projects starting which would not have occurred otherwise. The website is under development, and there are plans for a newsletter as a semiregular way for people to learn the latest of what is happening in the TDA community.

At the time of last year's meeting, TDA was undertaking a survey of the community. That demonstrated that junior people wanted chances to network and advertise their work, while more senior members wanted to be kept abreast of interesting developments in the field. Those results have motivated much of the direction of the activities over the past year, and future direction.

## **17. Eclipse Working Group (EWG)**

The ASA Eclipse Working Group (EWG) was recently established to be a resource for the four total solar eclipses coming to Australia in the next few years. The initial focus is on the major eclipse in 2028 which will pass right over the Sydney metropolitan area.

The EWG has two co-chairs: John Lattanzio and Terry Cuttle. The work of the EWG is carried out by various panels that have been constituted to address the different issues related to the eclipses. The Chair of each panel sits on the EWG, in an attempt to keep the WG at a manageable size but also ensure that all important areas are adequately covered and coordinated. The current panels (and their chairs) are listed below:

- Eye Safety and Safe Viewing of the Eclipse (Co-Chairs John Lattanzio and Terry Cuttle)
- Development of Resource Materials (Terry Cuttle)
- Communications (Tanya Hill)
- Media (Vanessa Moss)
- Education (Rob Hollow)
- Professional Astronomers (Michael Wheatland)
- Indigenous Issues (Peter Swanton)

Most initial activity has been related to the Safety Panel. It is imperative that we are all in agreement about the safety messages to promote. At present the EWG has representatives from RANZCO (Royal Australian and NZ College of Ophthalmologists), Optometry Australia, ARPANSA and the

CSIRO. Two key individuals are also on the panel: Ralph Chou (Uni Waterloo), a recognised international eclipse eye safety expert and chair of the International standards committee on viewing filters; and Stephen Dain (UNSW), an expert on the assessment of filter safety.

Current activities of the EWG are also focussing on preparing advice to local government authorities that the eclipse is coming, and a possible media interaction to coincide with three years to the eclipse in July.

### **18. Sustainability Working Group (SWG)**

The SWG is co-chaired by Themiya Nanayakkara and Clancy James. The SWG has had less activity this year, following a major contribution to the online-first 2024 ASM in the previous year. The group's main activity has been to assist with the ASA membership survey.

### **19. Communications Working Group**

The ASA Communications Working Group (CWG), chaired by Vanessa Moss, has been supporting the ASM 2025 organisers. The main focus has been giving access to use the existing ASA YouTube and Slack, as well as the creation of channels. The CWG is monitoring the usage of the ASA Slack, and is planning a review of access to ensure that only ASA members have access to relevant communication channels.

### **20. New Joint Group on Stellar and Planetary Astronomy.**

In June 2025, Council passed the By-Laws for the establishment of a new Joint Group (with the Geological Society of Australia, GSA) on Stellar and Planetary astronomy. The overarching aim of this Joint Group is to unify these two research areas into a coherent whole, and coordinate national efforts in understanding stars and planets and their co-evolution. Planned activities include increasing the visibility and connectedness of the stellar and planetary communities in Australia and internationally, strengthening the links with planetary and space science communities in Australia, coordination of relevant activities such as exoplanet discovery, organising annual workshops, and providing relevant policy input to the ASA and other relevant bodies. The Group formation committee consists of Daniel Price, Ben Pope, Belinda Nicholson and Orsola de Marco. Colleagues from the Geological Society of Australia will be invited to join the steering committee, in numbers which are likely to be lower than ASA representation.

There are changes to By-Law Section Q to allow for the addition of the Joint Group for Stellar and Planetary Astronomy. The relevant Specialist Group of the GSA, Planetary Geoscience and Geodynamics, is rather small and wishes to only have nominal representation on the Steering Committee. Q4 is changed to allow joint societies to have lesser representation if they wish. This does not have any impact on the ASA, except (if anything) give us effective sole control should the other society decide to reduce its representation. The change to Q7 simply adds the new Joint Group to the list of Joint Groups.

### **21. 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. There have been only a couple of additions and deletions to the designated observatories list in the past 12 months.

### **22. Correspondence**

The ASA email list remains the primary communication avenue for ASA news deemed to be of potential interest to a large fraction of the membership. Members can post directly to the list at

asa@mailman.sydney.edu.au. This list is also used for communications from the ASA Council to members regarding items of broad interest. The email channel has recently been augmented by an ASA Slack. Run by the ASA Media and Outreach Co-ordinator, Vanessa Moss, the Slack has dedicated channels covering most major aspects relevant to ASA members; it has also been used during multiple recent ASMs.

The Heads of Astronomy mailing list provides a useful avenue for discussing issues common across astronomy departments. An example in recent months has been the evolving situation relating to costs of publishing in astronomy journals which are very relevant to our community, such as MNRAS and PASA.

As usual, the Society has been active in advocating for astronomy to government.

- In April, the ASA made a submission to the review of the National Competitive Grants Program (NGCP). We emphasised the importance of appropriate funding for basic research, which we argued should be agnostic of any more focused national research priorities. This submission echoed our submissions in the previous 12 months to the national science and research priorities consultation, and the ARC review.
- In June, the ASA, NCA and AAL co-authored a letter to the new Science minister, Senator the Honourable Tim Ayers. We highlighted the exceptional international reputation of Australian astronomy, our contributions to training a highly-skilled STEM workforce, opportunities for Australian industries that come from astronomy hardware and software developments, and strong synergies with Indigenous knowledge through a shared connection to the sky.

The public-facing documents are available on the ASA [Public Document Archive](#).

### **23. 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 the annual *Science Meets Parliament* and have participated in STA programs such as the post-budget briefing.

The ASA was well represented at the 2025 Science Meets Parliament by:

- Simon Ellingsen (ICRAR)
- Jane Kaczmarek (SKAO)
- Richard McDermid (Macquarie)
- Benjamin Pope (Macquarie)
- Amit Seta (ANU)

Several other astronomers were also in attendance representing other organisations, allowing our community to be well represented. My thanks to AAL CEO Dr Alex Cooke for his insightful input to the briefing document which the ASA Council provides to all our delegates. It was great to see astronomy representatives across all organisations deliver a coherent, positive message. Feedback from delegates suggests that this was a useful experience, providing our members with a valuable understanding of the policy process and, developing skills in talking to decision makers. Of course, it was also an opportunity to highlight the excellent and exciting work happening in astronomy, and the contributions Australian astronomy makes to both our own nation and internationally.

### **24. National Committee for Astronomy**

The ASA President is an ex-officio member of the NCA, which is the body responsible for the links between the Academy of Science and the astronomy community, as well as a formal representative of Australian astronomy on the international stage including to the International Astronomical Union (IAU).

The main NCA activity this year has been the Decadal Plan for Australian Astronomy (2026-2035). It has been great to see so many ASA members engage strongly with the Decadal Plan process, by

leading and contributing to every Working Group as well as the Editorial Board. The ASA's contribution has been to use our communication channels to inform and engage the community in this process. As a member of the NCA, I have also had the opportunity to provide direct feedback on drafts of the Decadal Plan; my main focus has been to ensure that the full breadth of our community is accurately represented.

## **25. European Southern Observatory**

The 10-year Strategic Partnership between Australia and ESO will finish in 2027. The community's intention, as outlined in the new Decadal Plan (2026-2035), is for a bid for Full Membership following the conclusion of this partnership. This intention was also highlighted in the previous Decadal Plan. Because any such bid would need to be formally led by government, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) have formed the ESO Coordinating Group (ESO-CG); the group includes members from various Australian astronomy organisations as well as DISR. The ASA President is an ex-officio member of this group.

With the cost of living crisis and competing government priorities across many sectors, large funding requests such as ESO require a careful business case backed by evidence for long-term benefits to the nation. The AAL has been leading this work, working closely with DISR in exploring potential options. A working group has been established to identify in-kind opportunities that would be recognised by ESO should the Australian Government agree to full membership. AAL emphasises that this process is intended to be inclusive and is keen to gather all opportunities identified by the Australian astronomy community, as this will assist in building the best possible list of in-kind opportunities for discussion with ESO. Please contact the AAL CEO Alex Cooke directly if you wish to be involved.

## **26. Astronomy Australia Limited**

AAL is a not-for-profit organisation comprising Australian universities and astronomy research institutions. AAL activities include facilitating access to key research infrastructure (including telescopes and HPC), and assisting with the implementation of the Decadal Plan for Australian astronomy.

A major focus for AAL in recent years has been Australia's partnership with ESO, as detailed above. AAL is also involved with Australia's roles in other next generation ELTs. As part of the process to finalise the US Budget, the NSF has confirmed it will advance the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) into its Major Facilities Final Design Phase, one of the final steps before becoming eligible for US federal construction funding. Three Australian science teams are leading critical elements of the GMT project, including the laser tomography adaptive optics (LTAO) subsystem, the Giant Magellan Telescope Integral Field Spectrograph (GMTIFS), which will leverage the GMT's adaptive optics (AO) capabilities, and the MANIFEST multi fibre-positioning system. GMT Organisation founders are now working towards raising the additional partner funds required to get GMT through this next hurdle. AAL and the ANU remain closely engaged in discussions on the next steps for GMT and will keep the community updated as events unfold.

With the Rubin Observatory operational, AAL was involved in the "first look" event on June 23, when the first images were released. My thanks to our AAL-funded Astronomy Data and Computing Services (ADACS) colleagues, as well as those at several Australian universities, for the provision of software, training and technical support tools.

In seeking to demonstrate how Australian astronomy delivers on the priorities of the Australian Government, AAL has finalised a brochure on "Australian astronomers innovating with industry". The brochure provides case studies which showcase how sustained investment and Australian know-how delivers scientific discovery and also new technologies, commercial opportunities and new companies made in Australia. Copies of the brochure have been circulated to Ministers and other key decision makers, and will be made available at the ASM and published on the AAL website.

The AAL has been active in providing input into various government reviews related to science infrastructure and funding. This includes the National Competitive Grants Program review (to which the ASA also made a submission); the Strategic Examination of R&D; and the next Research Infrastructure Roadmap, which will determine how NCRIS funding is allocated from 2026 onwards. Further consultation processes are expected to take place including the release of an Issues Paper in the next few months, followed by an Exposure Draft of the next National Research Infrastructure Roadmap later in the year. All remaining funding rounds for NCRIS through to 2027 are likely to open soon. This will include funding for National Digital Research Infrastructure (NDRI), and the Step Changes for Research Translation, Environment and Climate, and Collections. AAL will keep the community informed once timing and scope becomes more clear.

AAL is proactive in looking for opportunities to fund projects which fit with the goals of the Decadal Plan, which enhance links between astronomy and industry, which deliver on ambitions around translating astronomy research into other domains, and which further Australia's space astronomy endeavours. Expressions of Interest (EOIs) can be submitted at any time during the year via the AAL website, however with the forthcoming NCRIS National Digital Research Infrastructure (NDRI) funding round, AAL anticipates additional funding will become available for related proposals. To support this process, a second Eoi template has been recently launched on the AAL website for those proposals which do not neatly fit into the usual 'science' project space.

As members will be aware, there have been changes in AAL leadership in 2025. The inaugural CEO of AAL, Mark McAuley, stepped down in early 2025. On behalf of the community, I would like to thank Mark for his dedication and delivery of so many positive outcomes over the last decade and a half. Alex Cooke commenced in the CEO role in January 2025, bringing with him a wealth of experience in government policy. Cath Trott has recently been appointed as Chair of the AAL Board, taking over from Orsola De Marco. I would like to thank Orsola for her tireless contributions, particularly relating to developing the ESO business case. I am sure the next President will enjoy working with Alex and Cath as much as I have.

## **27. New Priorities and Planned Activities for 2025/2026**

Over the past 12 months, the ASA has completed two of the 2024-2025 planned activities: (i) assisting the NCA with development of the 2026-2035 Decadal Plan; and (ii) conducting a survey of ASA membership to seek how we can best assist members, maximize benefits of the ASM to membership, including students, and to seek ideas on how to effectively use the Society's finances. The next stage in both activities is implementation of the relevant recommendations.

The Council has identified the following priorities for 2025-26:

- Use the survey results of the ASA membership survey to inform ASA activities and priorities.
- Manage PASA so that it remains an excellent option for ASA members in a rapidly changing publishing landscape.
- Enable web submissions for ASA prizes and student grants.
- Establish a working group to monitor and encourage diversity in ASA prize applications.

## **28. Student travel grants**

The number of applications for travel grants has increased substantially in the last few years, to the point where if these number are maintained, the previous practise of supporting all applications is financially unsustainable. Following extensive discussions, the ASA Council has decided to adjust the scheme slightly in light of this. First, we will revert to the pre-COVID rule of supporting a maximum of one trip per student (as opposed to two - one conference and one workshop). This change is unlikely to be significant: in the history of the scheme, only two students have received funding for multiple trips. The second change is to make the grants competitive; if the number of applications returns to pre-COVID levels, we expect to be able to fund the majority of eligible applications. Students in the second half of their PhD (i.e. with a series of results to present), and those who had limited or no funded opportunities to present at international conferences, will be

prioritised. Third, the value of the grants will be raised to up to \$2000 per application. The changes will start following the closure of the current application round on September 30.

## **29. By-laws**

The introduction of the Joint Group on Stellar and Planetary Astronomy, and waiving of membership fees for members of at least 50 years' standing, has facilitated some changes to the By-Laws. The updated By-Laws are below.

### **By-Law Section A**

A5 (2025)

A reminder that the annual subscription has become due on the first day of January shall be sent to each member, not an Honorary Fellow, Honorary Associate Member or member of 50 or more continuous years standing, in or before January of each year. A second reminder shall be sent in June to those members, not Honorary Fellows, Honorary Associate Member or member of 50 or more continuous years standing, whose subscription has not yet been received.

A10 (2025)

Any Full Member or Fellow who has been a member of the Society continuously for 50 years, including any period of student membership, may continue membership at no additional cost.

### **By-Law Section Q**

Q4 (2025)

A Joint Group of the Society will be managed by a committee comprising equal numbers of members from each society and jointly chaired by one person from each society unless the other society requests that it have lesser representation. The Astronomical Society of Australia chair must be a Full Member, Fellow or Honorary Fellow of the Society as defined by Articles 4 (i), (ii) and 5 of this Constitution. Where a committee member is from both societies, they must nominate which society has elected or appointed them. Each committee chair or co-chair will be elected annually or biennially, as agreed by both Societies, from the respective society's membership within the Joint Group. The governing body of each society may nominate one of its own number as an ex-officio member of the Group committee.

Q7 (2025)

The Society has established the following Joint Groups with the cognate societies listed.

- (i) Group for Astroparticle Physics (GAP), with the Australian Institute of Physics,
- (ii) Group on Stellar and Planetary Astronomy (SPA), with the Geological Society of Australia.

### **By-Law section N**

N7 (2025)

The Chapters of the Society are:

- (i) Australian National Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics (ANITA) Chapter,
- (ii) Early Career Researcher (ECR) Chapter,
- (iii) Education and Public Outreach (EPOC) Chapter,
- (iv) Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in Astronomy (IDEA) Chapter,
- (v) Time Domain Astronomy (TDA) Chapter,
- (vi) History of Australian Astronomy (HAAC) Chapter.

## **30. Harley Wood School of Astronomy and ASM/AGM 2026**

The 2026 ASM and HWSA will be organised by the Australian National University, and held in a hybrid in-person and online format. Thanks to Melanie Kaasinen and other ANU colleagues for hosting our community.

### **31. Membership survey**

The long awaited online survey of the ASA membership was released on 13 May and closed on 8 June. 264 ASA members completed the survey, predominantly astronomers with PhDs (72%) and astronomers without PhDs (18%). Approximately 25% of respondents were in fixed-term positions, and 55% in continuing positions; the rest were continuing contingent (i.e. continuing positions subject to funding) or responded “N/A” for this question.

Preliminary analysis done so far indicates that respondents were generally satisfied with ASA’s activities (including Chapters and Groups), the Society’s priorities and governance, the organisation of the Annual Scientific Meeting and the Harley Wood School, and PASA. A large majority of respondents would recommend ASA membership to a colleague.

In the near future, a deeper analysis will examine the consistency – or otherwise – of responses across demographic groups. The results of this analysis will inform Council’s prioritisation of activities over the next 12 months and beyond.

### **32. ASA Council for 2025-27**

The Executive for the 2025-27 ASA Council was elected unopposed. There was an election for the five General Councillor positions, with a 37% response rate from the membership.

The Council for 2025-27 is as follows:

Richard McDermid	President
Claudia Lagos	Vice President
Stas Shabala	Immediate Past President
John O’Byrne	Secretary
Katrina Sealey	Secretary
Yeshe Fenner	Treasurer
Nichole Barry	Councillor
Manisha Caleb	Councillor
Nick Seymour	Councillor
Ivy Wong	Councillor
Daniel Zucker	Councillor
Pradosh Barun Das	Student Representative
Minh Huynh	Chair, PASA Editorial Board
Tanya Hill	Prizes and Awards Co-ordinator
Vanessa Moss	Media and Outreach Co-ordinator

### **33. Concluding remarks**

This is my final sign-off as your President. The last two years have flown by. Personal highlights have included watching our community come together virtually and in person at the ASMs, being “inside the room” during the development of the new Decadal Plan, and working closely with leaders of the NCA, the AAL, and closely related societies such as the AIP on championing the importance of astronomy and other fundamental sciences to the nation’s (and indeed the world’s) future.

A huge thanks to all ASA Councillors and the Executive for their wisdom and hard work behind the scenes. And a big thanks to you, the members. It has been a privilege to represent such a cohesive community, full of nice people who are capable of looking beyond narrow, vested interests – a lovely reminder of the good that exists in today’s uncertain world. I am delighted to leave the stewardship

of our Society in Richard McDermid's very capable hands, and look forward to watching our community blossom under his leadership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Shabala', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Stas Shabala

President