



Annual Report 2013

NOTICE OF 2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given that the Seventeenth Annual General Meeting of Macarthur Astronomical Society will be held as follows:

Date: Monday 16th April, 2012.

Time: 7.30 pm sharp

Venue: Main Lecture Theatre, Building 30, University of Western Sydney,
Campbelltown Campus.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Opening of Meeting, welcome and apologies.
2. Minutes of previous AGM, 16th April 2012.
3. Business arising out of the minutes.
4. Presentation of Annual Reports.
5. Presentation of Membership Awards.
6. Appointment of Returning Officer.
7. Election of Management Committee for 2013-2014.
8. Other Business.
9. Close of Meeting.

Kindly note that to be eligible to vote at the AGM you must be a paid up member for 2013-14.

Following the conclusion of the AGM, the meeting will continue as an Ordinary General Meeting (Macarthur Astronomy Forum).

Our Speaker will be Dr Jonti Horner – UNSW
Subject: Rocks from Space

Tony Law
Acting Secretary

12th April 2013

President's Report March 2013

As this year's President, I've been very fortunate to experience what it's like to be involved with a tightly-knit group of talented and dedicated people who constitute what we know as the Macarthur Astronomical Society. As a general member, one isn't always privy to how much effort and dedication it takes to run a Society such as M.A.S. It is with the help of not only a wonderful committee this year, but also an enthusiastic few outside of the committee that really make the animal tick.

Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank two academics. Thank you, our esteemed Patron, Prof. Bryan Gaensler for your continuing support. We acknowledge the time and your phenomenal expertise. Thank you Professor - our members very much appreciate what you do for our Society. I'd also like to thank Prof. Vaughan Macefield, Provost - Campbelltown Campus, UWS. Professor Macefield and our management committee have struck a great relationship this year that sees our society maintain an allotted room for Forum nights throughout the year, as well as being asked to co-develop up-coming events throughout the year in celebration of UWS's commitment to our local community. We look forward to forging a great collaborative relationship.

I dislike singling people out, because it is truly a team effort, but I feel that I must when it comes to Tony Law. As a society we, and I especially, owe him a great deal. Our committee structure is a little different this year, and we've all worn several hats each since the beginning of the year with people coming and going. Tony has served simultaneously as Vice President, Secretary, Membership Officer, Observatory Committee member, UWS liaison, Trips Organiser and much, much more. To Tony, I personally thank you. You have been our glue this year and without you we could not have achieved anywhere near what I believe we have. Tony has also single-handedly arranged our first international field trip ever to Hawaii later this year, to visit a number of facilities located on that Mt Mecca of science, Mauna Kea. A truly monumental organisational effort spanning many months, this will certainly a highlight in our now long history.

I'd like to thank the rest of our hard working team. On the committee, I've had the pleasure of serving with Barry Moore as Treasurer, Stewart Grainger as our intrepid Merchandise Officer, Nicole Ireland as Secretary and more recently Mike Nicholas. Nicole had to move east, and as a result we lost her to the tyranny of distance. Thank you for your time while you were with us. To Mike, who stepped in to fill the role until this AGM, I thank you for helping us out during this period and also for organising the successful Canberra trip just recently. Barry and Stewart, your effort is recognised and for it we thank you. My thanks extend, also, to Henry Swierk and Lloyd Wright who have served as general committee members and have lent their guidance and experience to our process.

To those outside our core committee who have also made this Society what it is: Roger Powell - lead member and chief proposal draughtsman on our Observatory

Committee along with Tony Law, ex President Trevor Rhodes and more recently Michael Jupe. Thank you all, our observatory project is in wonderful hands. To ex President John Rombi, without whom we'd be sitting there every month looking at a blank screen. John has orchestrated our guest speaker list for several years now, and as a result of his very hard work we've been fortunate to witness a slew of top-notch speakers throughout the year, with more to come. I know that our guest list is the envy of every astronomical society in Australia. Another ex President - Noel Sharp, is our Stargard Liaison Officer. We thank you as well as you interact with the Wollondilly Council on our behalf to ensure that we have constant access to Stargard, our home observation field at The Oaks. Ned Pastor, who does us a great service in liaising with International House at Sydney University to provide an open cabin for us on our Forest nights. Ned - we appreciate your tireless efforts in maintaining a great facility for our members when we're down there on new moon weekends. I'd also sincerely like to thank Penny Reid, who stepped into the breach for us as Refreshments Engineer, so that we might all enjoy a cuppa and bickie after our forum nights.

We are in a healthy state financially and our Treasurer, Barry Moore, will highlight our position in his report. Our current reserves are working hard to earn us interest, in an effort to be able to one day realise many of our dreams and provide our membership with, as an example, a top-flight observatory facility close to home. We acknowledge that our goal is long term, but planning is well underway, and enjoys crucial support from local and state government as well as from the general community and business sectors. Several very positive and encouraging newspaper reports on our plans have surfaced this year, and it's evident that there are plenty of people who would like to see us succeed in building what is seen as a worthwhile and refreshing addition to the area in which we live. We will endeavour to keep you all posted on developments as they happen.

Our website and Facebook page have grown this year. We enjoy very good general communications with each other via these two portals and will continue to rely on them to disseminate information on behalf of M.A.S. along with email. Our Facebook site now has 140 members, and many more visit it regularly - particularly people who are finding out what we are about and have an opportunity to ask questions of us prior to joining. Both our website and Facebook offer our members a way of staying in tune with what our society is doing and has planned. If everything goes to plan, we should have a brand new website ready in late May. Please stay tuned.

Our committee this year has decided to install an exciting new programme to benefit everyone who is a financial member of M.A.S. Starting this year, M.A.S. will shout each and every one of you to a free weekend at The Forest. You will receive new membership cards that feature a small star printed in the bottom right hand corner. Bring this membership card with you when you decide to come along on a new moon weekend, and this star will be punched, signifying that you've taken your allocated weekend. The Forest is a fabulous weekend away - even if the weather isn't wonderful the whole time. There's a friendly atmosphere and many stories (both true and untrue!) are told by the fire in winter - as well as valuable things learned. Bring your equipment and observe or photograph our Forest sky which really has to be seen to be believed on a clear night.

In closing, I'd like to re-iterate what I've written, and thank the current and up-coming committees, and other members who have worked tirelessly to provide us with a vibrant and fun place to be. Thank you too, members, for supporting us and making M.A.S. what it is - one of the most, of not most, active astronomical societies in the country. To the in-coming committee, I wish you well and trust that you will continue to drive the good ship "M.A.S." forward.

Chris Malikoff
President M.A.S. 2012-2013

Treasurer's Report March 2013

I would like to thank all committee members for their assistance during the year, the members who assisted with our fund raising efforts and Graeme Bellamy for his speedy audit of the accounts. A copy of the audited accounts is attached to this report. It has been my pleasure to act as Treasurer and I thank Tony Law (previous Treasurer up to Feb2012) for his assistance and help in my taking up as treasurer. It is my intention to continue as your treasurer for 2013.

Our 2012/13 year has been another busy year and has seen our total assets increase by almost \$1,674 to \$19,944. This was due to our sausage sizzle at Bunnings, public donations at our meetings, open nights and of course interest from our term deposit which is now at \$12,000.

After much negotiation, thanks to Tony, we still have our venue at UWS for free and the costs for the Belanglo Forest Cabin are still a very reasonable \$120/month for the two nights. The committee has decided to offer one free weekend to members on presentation of their membership card (for punching) as an incentive to see this excellent venue increase in patronage. Standard Fees are \$15.00/night for up to two nights; the third night would be free.

The committee agreed that Membership fees would be maintained at current levels and Tony as Vice President is now looking after membership, although I still do banking and will also write out receipts for members as well. Tony will report our increase in membership. There has been a rush Membership payments that will now appear in the next year's financial report, so next year I encourage membership payment prior to the "books" closing in Feb 28 2013 for audit as this would help to see the real growth.

For members information we have paid our Public Liability insurance, the hire of the Dudley Chesham field, our Domain name registration and our PO BOX lease. New assets added to our society include the Mallicam digital camera with battery and mounting (foam) board for the large collection of professional images for public forums (the magnitude displays).

The recent trip to Canberra (organized by Mike Nicholas) was very successful and was a break even event. I extend a big thank you to Mike, on behalf of all members that attended. Tony informs me that planning for our major event to Hawaii is just about complete and I will be assisting with the necessary banking as required. I wish all those going a safe and enjoyable trip.

The audited accounts follow.

Barry Moore,

Hon. Treasurer, Macarthur Astronomical Society Inc

MACARTHUR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
Financial Statement
Year ended 28th February, 2013

BALANCE SHEET

	2013	2012
Accumulated Funds		
Funds at beginning of year	\$ 18,270.05	\$ 13,570.14
Asset Replacement Reserve	\$ -	\$ -
Profit/(Loss) for the year	\$ 1,673.85	\$ 4,699.91
	<u>\$ 19,943.90</u>	<u>\$ 18,270.05</u>
Represented by:		
Current Assets (Stock)	\$ 1,484.52	\$ 2,204.07
Cash at bank (trading account)	\$ 3,767.65	\$ 5,172.20
Fixed Term Deposit	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Pre Paid Insurance	\$ 754.13	\$ 745.88
Petty Cash Advances	\$ 77.60	\$ 140.00
Pay Pal Account	\$ -	\$ 7.90
Hawaii Deposit Account	\$ 1,646.70	\$ 682.36
	<u>\$ 19,730.60</u>	<u>\$ 18,952.41</u>
Non - Current Assets		
Plant & Equipment (Cost) *see note 2	\$ 5,659.23	\$ 3,799.23
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	-\$ 3,799.23	-\$ 3,799.23
	<u>\$ 1,860.00</u>	<u>\$ -</u>
Current Liabilities		
Members deposit account Hawaii	-\$ 1,646.70	-\$ 682.36
Total Assets (net members equity)	<u>\$ 19,943.90</u>	<u>\$ 18,270.05</u>

Independent Audit Report

I have audited the financial statements, being the statement of financial position and statement of financial performance. The Astronomical Society Committee is responsible for the financial statements. The Audit has been conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. My procedures including examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with accounting standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the Astronomical Society's financial position and the results of its operation. The Audit opinion expressed has been formed on the above basis.

Note 1 - Accounting principles and methods adopted in accounts


The accounts have been prepared on the cash basis, and in accordance with applicable statements of accounting concepts and accounting standards issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB). They have also been prepared on the basis of historical costs. The accounting policies have been consistently applied unless otherwise stated.

Note 2 - Non-Current Assets

Non-Current assets are included at cost or at independent valuation. All non-current assets are depreciated over their estimated useful life commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use. Please note Capital Expenditure of \$1,860.00 has been incurred during the financial year made up of foam Display Board \$512.00 and a Mallincam with Battery \$1,348.00 no depreciation has been applied to the assets as they were purchased in the last month of the financial year.

Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statement of Macarthur Astronomical Society present fairly in accordance with applicable accounting standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements to reflect the financial position of Macarthur Astronomical Society as at the 28th February, 2013 and the results of its operations for the year then ended.


Graeme David Bellamy
 138 Ashford Avenue, Milperra, 2214
 Dated this 17th March, 2013

MACARTHUR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
Statement of Financial Performance
Year ended 28th February, 2013

	2013	2012	<i>Performance Variance</i>
Income			\$
Membership Fees	\$ 3,018.88	\$ 3,345.00	(326.12)
Donations and Prime Focus	\$ 452.16	\$ 1,068.55	(616.39)
Interest	\$ 459.90	\$ 244.38	215.52
Sale of Merchandise	\$ 2,386.25	\$ 2,553.30	(167.05)
Dinners (Members contribution)	\$ 961.61	\$ 579.80	381.81
Grounds (Bellangalo Forest)	\$ 1,115.00	\$ 702.00	413.00
Tea & Coffee	\$ 143.70	\$ 235.00	(91.30)
AAO Trip Parkes	\$ -	\$ 6,042.20	(6,042.20)
Bunnings Fund Raiser	\$ 1,481.00	\$ 2,097.00	(616.00)
	<u>\$ 10,018.50</u>	<u>\$ 16,867.23</u>	<u>(6,848.73)</u>
Expenditure			
Filing Fees	\$ 49.00	\$ 89.00	40.00
Insurance	\$ 745.88	\$ 734.88	(11.00)
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 261.71	\$ 5.50	(256.21)
Postage & Printing	\$ 12.00	\$ 55.00	43.00
PO Box Rental	\$ 93.00	\$ 86.00	(7.00)
Purchase of Goods for Sale at cost	\$ 1,780.45	\$ 1,542.73	(237.72)
Domain Registration / Web	\$ 152.66	\$ -	(152.66)
Belangalo/Starguard	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,260.00	60.00
Room Hire	\$ -	\$ 193.00	193.00
Guest Speakers Gifts	\$ 322.67	\$ -	(322.67)
Dinners (Members and Speakers)	\$ 1,465.99	\$ 639.35	(826.64)
AAO Trip Parkes	\$ -	\$ 6,058.30	6,058.30
Donation Schools	\$ -	\$ 500.00	500.00
First Aid Supplies	\$ -	\$ 82.50	82.50
Bunnings Expenses	\$ 867.66	\$ 921.06	53.40
Prime Focus Expense	\$ 1,107.46	\$ -	(1,107.46)
Stationery	\$ 286.17	\$ -	(286.17)
	<u>\$ 8,344.65</u>	<u>\$ 12,167.32</u>	<u>\$3,822.67</u>
Operating Profit/(Loss) for year	\$ 1,673.85	\$ 4,699.91	(\$3,026.06)



Macarthur Astronomical Society
Stock Reconciliation
For year ended 28th February, 2013

Opening Stock at 1 st March, 2012	\$2,204.07
Add: Purchases	<u>\$1,060.90</u>
	\$3,264.97
Less: Closing Stock	\$2,359.52
Consignment Stock	<u>\$875.00</u>
Closing Stock at 28 th February, 2013	<u>\$1,484.52</u>

Sales	\$2,386.25
Less: Cost of sales	<u>\$1,780.45</u>
Profit on Sales	<u>\$ 605.80</u>

Bank Reconciliation
As at 28th February, 2013

Balance as per Statement 1 st March, 2012	\$3,607.77 Cr
Add: Outstanding Deposits	<u>\$ 159.88</u>
Balance as per Cash Book 28 th February, 2013	<u>\$3,767.65 Cr</u>

G D Kullay

OBSERVATORY SUB-COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2013

AIMS AND ORIGINS

The Society is now over seventeen years old and to progress it needed to make some bold decisions:

On 1st June 2011, the Management Committee debated the Society's aims for the next five years and resolved as follows:

“That this committee aspires to achieve the financial growth and scientific excellence that will empower the future acquisition of advanced astronomical equipment and the property in which to house it. To achieve this we resolve to increase our membership; improve our practical expertise; and institute a fund raising programme, whilst still giving value for money to our members and continuing with our outreach programme.”

On 17th November 2011, it was further agreed to follow a suggestion by Carol McVeigh that we pursue the new Dharawal National Park as a potential observatory site.

MEMBERSHIP

The Management Committee formed a three-member Sub-committee to handle the day-to-day handling of the site investigations and negotiations. The Sub-committee consisted of Trevor Rhodes, Tony Law and Roger Powell.

At its first meeting, the Sub-committee appointed Roger Powell to take care of general liaison & secretarial duties but did not create any other formal positions. As MAS Vice-President, Tony Law is now the senior member.

In February 2013, Trevor Rhodes resigned from the Sub-committee and Michael Jupe was appointed to the vacant position.

SITE SEARCH

The ideal observatory site will have the following basic attributes:

- be within easy driving distance of Campbelltown/Camden.
- be remote from residential areas, to minimise the effects of light pollution.
- be in an existing clearing with good sky views.
- have vehicular access.
- have mobile communications access.

The search was not limited to Dharawal but was extended generally from Holsworthy in the north to Cataract and beyond in the south. Only two potential sites were identified in the Dharawal region. One was the North Cliff Colliery and the other was Burkes Clay Pit. After investigation, the Clay Pit was found to be unavailable in the desired time-frame. The Scout Camp within the Cataract water catchment was also investigated but found inappropriate for astronomy.

NORTH CLIFF SITE

The North Cliff site was found to be the best site in the region suitable for astronomy - meeting all the above requirements – and no other suitable site could be identified. If we don't get this site the future for an MAS observatory will be bleak. The site has been inspected twice, courtesy of BHP-Billiton – once during the daytime and once during the evening.

It is within easy reach of Campbelltown but is in a very remote situation. It has a large clearing with excellent sky views and no nearby light sources. The land parcel is within the confines of the Dharawal National Park but is not yet part of it. It is the only remote location in the region identified as having a suitably large forest clearing and we are seeking free use of the land for two or three observatory domes and a cabin.

STAKEHOLDERS

NSW Crown Land are the current site owners. It is unclear what the NSW Government will do with it but it seems generally expected that the land is to be restored and then declared part of the National Park.

BHP Billiton are the leaseholders and they have ceased mining operations on the site. It is unknown when their lease will expire but the lease terms require them to restore the site to bushland.

NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service are expected to issue a Plan of Management (POM) for Dharawal National Park soon. We are drafting a submission document in preparation for the POM public comment period.

Aboriginal land claim. At our meeting with the Tharawal Lands Council, the then CEO, Mr. Greg Bondar, informed us that the Council had no issues whatsoever with our proposal to build an observatory on the land, whether in Dharawal National Park or not. However, he also advised that the Lands Council had identified the land as a potential Aboriginal Land Titles claim.

The site is within the Wollondilly State Electorate, the Wollondilly LGA and the Macarthur Federal seat.

We wish to avoid losing the existing site features, which include a wide forest clearing, an access road, a parking area and an adjacent dam. There appear to be three future scenarios for the land: (i) remain Crown Land; (ii) transfer to Dharawal National Park and NPWS control; or (iii) potential Aboriginal ownership.

The difficulties for MAS vary with each of the options. If the site remains Crown Land and we can negotiate free use of the land, the only obstacle will be obtaining Wollondilly Shire Council Development Approval. If the land title is transferred to National Parks and Wildlife control, it is possible that there may be opposition to our using the Park. If the land is transferred to Aboriginal ownership, we foresee difficulties in negotiating free rental.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We have received plenty of support for our proposal but no formal objections. We have received the overwhelming support and assistance of State MPs Jai Rowell MP and Bryan Doyle MP. Federal MPs Russell Matheson and Laurie Ferguson have both signalled their support.

We have also received enthusiastic letters of support from The Mayor of Wollondilly, Cr Mitchell; and from leading Australian professional astronomers Prof. Bryan Gaensler and Prof. Geraint Lewis.

We have made a courtesy presentation to the Macarthur Branch of National Parks Association. The Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser provided fantastic coverage of the proposal last October and again last month.

The Mayor of Campbelltown, Cr Sue Dobson stated publicly in October 2012 that she would like to meet us to discuss the proposal. However, despite several requests, she has so far declined to meet us.

UWS are aware of our plans, through Dr. Ragbir Bhathal (UWS Observatory Director) and Vaughan Macefield (Campbelltown Provost).

Ministerial Support for the project will be crucial and we have sought, through Jai Rowell MP, the support of the Minister for Environment; the Minister for Primary Industry and Lands; and the Premier for our proposal.

FINANCE

No MAS money has been expended in reaching the current situation but the Society will require considerable financial resources, should it find itself in a position to proceed with the observatory. The Sub-committee is not responsible for finance, hence the necessary fund-raising strategies need to be built up by the Management Committee, in accordance with the June 2011 resolution.

It will be crucial to seek out Federal Government grants and other benefactors to help finance the observatory but the receipt of any possible large grants may well be dependent upon MAS demonstrating that it can bear part of the cost out of its own resources.

THE FUTURE

The Member for Wollondilly, Jai Rowell MP, was approached in March to coordinate a 'Stakeholder Meeting' on our behalf, to review the issues relating to site ownership and usage; and he is now enthusiastically handling that for us, through the Minister for Environment and Minister for Primary Industry and Lands. The outcome of this proposed meeting and any other developments will be advised in due course.

I would like to thank Tony Law, Trevor Rhodes and Michael Jupe for their splendid efforts on behalf of the Sub-committee and the Society. We may not yet have achieved our much dreamed of observatory but we have achieved a lot so far. With general community support and with the active participation of our local political representatives, we can be optimistic.

If we, the Sub-committee, can successfully negotiate a path through a maze of government red-tape; and if we, the Society members, can support and strengthen our fund-raising activities, then the dream of a modern observatory here in Macarthur will be within our grasp.

Roger Powell

Observatory Project Liaison