

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES: SUB-DIVISION D1; ASTROPHYSICS

1. National and international meetings and conferences on astrophysics and cosmology, held in South Africa during the past year or imminently [besides the SAIP Annual Conference]:

1.1 HERA (Hydrogen epoch of reionisation array) workshop, Cape Town, February 2016

1.2 MeerKAT Science Workshop, Stellenbosch, May 2016

1.3 Pulsar Timing Array workshop, Stellenbosch, June 2016

1.4 Astronomy Town Meeting, Cape Town, July 2016

1.5 Cluster Comparison workshop, Cape Town, July 2016

1.6 Massive Beasts of the Cosmos, Kruger Park, July 2016

2. Awards

Kevin Govender of the Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) of the International Astronomical Union, was a co-winner of the prestigious Edinburgh medal.

3. Continuing developments

3.1 Good progress was made with the growth of Sutherland as one of the world's prime sites for observational astronomy in the optical and IR, with two new telescopes procured and various high-level upgrades or redesigns of instruments completed or underway.

3.2 The MeerKAT array of radio telescopes is on schedule and full PI-led science programmes are set to start early in 2017. This array will eventually be incorporated into Phase 1 of the SKA.

4. SAIP2016

A total of 36 oral presentations and 17 poster presentations in the Astrophysics sub-division were included in the programme. Professor Steve Kahn of the LSST project acted both as plenary speaker and public speaker at the conference.

5. Departures

Prof Harm Moraal, a previously A-rated scientist and also past president of the SAIP, passed away unexpectedly in November 2015.

Summary: Astrophysics in SA continued showing very strong growth during the past 12 months, as measured in the extent of facilities and the numbers of senior staff and students and especially in the growing number of workshops and conferences covering a broad spectrum of topics and very well attended by international participants.