

22nd December 2009

Prof John Storey
School of Physics
University of New South Wales
Sydney NSW 2052

Dear John,

Thank you for submitting two Expressions of Interest (EoI) to assist AAL in the development of a \$10M Investment Plan for EIF-funded astronomy infrastructure. We received a total of 18 EoIs with a total funding request four-and-a-half times more than the funds available. On 14th December 2009 the AAL Board met to review all 18 EoIs, with consideration given to strategic significance, project maturity and risk, alignment with the current Australian astronomy Decadal Plan, and scientific return for the proposed investment.

EoIs were given a rank of 1 (top \$10.2M), 2 (next \$7.0M), 3 (next \$6.3M) and 4 (next \$21.8M).

The AAL Board was delighted to note that a timeline for developing a new strategic plan for Antarctic astronomy was discussed at the Antarctic Astronomy Advisory Committee teleconference on 10th December 2009. The Board proposes to leverage EIF funding to best position Australia to advance that new strategy once it is considered by the mid-term review of the Decadal Plan.

In that context your proposal titled 'Site qualification and exploratory science from Antarctica' was considered an appropriate investment to support the development of a new strategy. The AAL Board concluded that this project would maintain or develop important international partnerships and play to the technical strengths of the group at UNSW. The PLATOs for Dome A and Dome F, Modular PLATO for Ridge A with THz capability, and AST3 wide-field optical telescopes for Dome A were ranked as 1. The 5m THz telescope for Dome A was ranked as 2. As per your request, we will seek to provide early funding of \$330K during 2010.

In the same context your proposal titled 'Wide-field IR telescopes in Antarctica' received an overall ranking of 4. With regards to the PLT component of this EoI, an attachment to your submission, *Letter of intent to participate in an international board for the study of a Polar Large Telescope (PLT)*, states "costs of this study of phase B are estimated at approximately 2 million euros [AUD3.2M]" If AAL were to have participated in such a study, it would expect Australia to contribute no-more than 50% of the costs (AUD1.6M). Additionally the project would need to be considered in light of the new Antarctic strategy.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to submit two EoIs.

Best regards,



Dr Martin Cole, Chair, AAL.