

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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A new 12 metre telescope dish will be lifted into place at the UTAS Mount Pleasant Observatory next week as part of a new Australia-wide network.

The network aims to examine the structure and evolution of the Australian continent in time and space.

Later this year telescopes will also be installed at Yarragadee in Western Australia and Katherine in the Northern Territory to complete the triangle-shaped network.

The establishment of the network is an initiative of the AuScope organisation, of which UTAS is a partner. AuScope is funded by the Australian Government under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS).

Dr Jim Lovell, from the UTAS School of Maths and Physics, said measuring accurate positions is very difficult because nothing on the Earth is fixed.

“Continents drift, there are earthquakes all the time and we’re subject to the tidal attraction of the Sun and Moon-we need a fixed point of reference off the Earth,” Dr Lovell said.

The new telescope will allow astronomers to use quasars- objects billions of light years away- as fixed points of reference.

“Because quasars are so bright and so far away, they are stationary and make excellent target objects-we can use them to work out the positions of our telescopes to high precision,” Dr Lovell said.

“At the moment it's possible to make centimetre-level measurements but AuScope aims to improve that to millimetre levels.”

UTAS will operate the new facility for AuScope with the telescopes controlled remotely from the Hobart campus.

The telescopes for the network are manufactured by Cobham Satcom Patriot products.

**Media opportunity:** The new telescope dish is scheduled to be lifted into place on Monday 20 April at 8am (duration about three hours) at the Mount Pleasant Observatory. (Directions attached.)

**Please note:** If the weather is bad on Monday the installation may be delayed. Those who are planning on visiting the site should phone Dr Jim Lovell before heading out, to confirm the installation is going ahead. **Dr Jim Lovell, mobile: 0412 127 364**

**Further Information:**

**The AuScope Project: <http://www.auscope.org.au>**

**UTAS' involvement in AuScope: <http://www-ra.phys.utas.edu.au/auscope>**

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