

**Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio  
2016-17 Supplementary Budget Estimates  
20 October 2016

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**AGENCY:** CSIRO

**TOPIC:** ATNF fiscal pressures

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Carr

**QUESTION No.:** SI-90

According to a report of the Australia Telescope Users Committee deliberations of the 2nd and 3rd of June 2016 on the CSIRO website “ATNF is facing a challenge to keep the current suite of observatories operational in the face of delays in the construction of ASKAP, and the recent AAL budgetary proposal that no future astronomy NCRIS funding should be distributed to ATNF after the 2016/17 financial year. This would put the observatory under serious financial strain.”

1. What are your plans to manage this fiscal issue?
2. Why is AAL essentially defunding Parkes and other ATNF facilities?
3. Are there any plans to alter or wind back operations at Narrabri?
4. Are there any plans to seek philanthropic donations or other forms of external funding?
5. Are there any plans or suggestions to sell telescope time or any other form of user charges?

**ANSWER**

1. CSIRO is pursuing new business models including examining the feasibility of reducing expenditure on telescope operations, and seeking external funds through selling time on the telescopes outside of the ATNF government funded provisions. A call for Expressions of Interest to purchase time on the Australia Telescope is expected to be issued in due course.

CSIRO is currently in discussion with AAL on funding from the 2017-18 FY that may enable some ongoing merit-based access to the Parkes Telescope and the ATCA until SKA is available.

CSIRO is also discussing within the context of the national infrastructure roadmap process, the possibility of interim funding for the Australia Telescope Compact Array and/or Parkes to enable continuity in science capability until transition to the new business models has occurred.

2. The rationale for any decisions taken by AAL should be directed to AAL.
3. No.
4. Yes, see answer to Q1.
5. Yes, there are plans to sell telescope time (see answer to Q1). There are no plans to impose user charges for time that is allocated under the ATNF government funded provisions (this time is funded by CSIRO appropriation and the NCRIS program).