

Australian amateur astronomical conventions: a history of NACAA

John L Perdrix

Astronomy WA

Abstract

Following a visit to Mt. Stromlo Observatory in 1965 October and a preliminary get-together during Easter in the following year at Katoomba, the first Convention was held in Canberra during Easter 1967. Conventions followed annually until 1970 after which they have been held at Easter biennially with a new name – National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers – which has remained to the present day. A short preliminary history of the Conventions held during the past thirty years is presented as much material is still to be found, it is either unavailable or has been lost either physically or in the memory.

1 Introduction

The visit of the James Cook Astronomers Club (JCAC)¹ and the Canberra Astronomical Society (CAS)² to the Mt. Stromlo Observatory in October 1965 resulted in Elaine Polglase of the JCAC and Joe Kawalski of the CAS sending a letter (Figure 1) to all Australian amateur astronomical societies advising them of a preliminary meeting at Katoomba during Easter in the following year prior to the first convention. Interest by the societies was mixed and it was noticeable that the smaller, particularly non-capital city, ones showed greater enthusiasm for the concept, although they may not have attended.

Whilst the results of the Katoomba Meeting are known, there appears to be no records and amateurs who were around at the time have either passed on, cannot recall events of over thirty years ago, have lost all interest in the science, or are not interested in trying to help put together a record of these conventions for posterity. The meeting confirmed the idea of a gathering in Canberra in 1967 which would be organized by the JCAC and the Pacific Astronomical Society (PAS)³ and held at Easter, note that neither of these organizations were located in Canberra nor in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a logistical nightmare. In all nineteen conventions have been held in each of the Australian States and one Territory. Table 1 lists the locations and hosting organizations of these conventions, the exact names of the first four will be found in the text.

Dear Sir,

In 1965 October the Canberra Astronomical Society and the James Cook Astronomy Club enjoyed a wonderful visit to Mt. Stromlo Observatory.

During the meeting that followed the clubs decided to suggest to all amateur astronomy clubs throughout Australia the possibility of holding a convention in Canberra, Easter, 1967.

In order to ensure the success of this venture, it was further proposed a preliminary meeting be held in Katoomba, Easter, 1966. One of the functions of this meeting will be to appoint a committee to organise the National Convention.

We have chosen Katoomba, as it provides a variety of tourist attractions for the non-astronomy enthusiasts in the family, and accommodation to suit those who wish to camp, caravan, flat or board. Also we sincerely hope, that by making the venue a holiday resort, all of us will have the chance to meet in a relaxed environment.

Whilst we realise that interstate clubs may not be able to be represented at Katoomba in 1966, there may be one of your members in Sydney at the time able to attend. We would certainly appreciate your club's support and look forward to any suggestions you may care to make in regard to the general programme.

In order to assess the response and commence the preliminary arrangements as soon as possible, it would be appreciated if your replies could be forwarded to the secretary, P.O. Box 31, Sutherland, N.S.W.

Hoping to receive your full co-operation.

We are, yours sincerely,
Elaine E. Polglase, for JCAC
J. Kowalski, for CAS

Figure 1. Letter sent to Australian amateur astronomical societies in 1965.

Table 1. Australian amateur astronomical conventions, 1967-2000.

No.	Year	City	Host(s)
1	1967	Canberra	James Cook Astronomers Club Pacific Astronomical Society
2	1968	Port Macquarie	Port Macquarie Astronomical Association
3	1969	Ballarat	Ballaarat Astronomical Society
4	1970	Wollongong	Illawarra Astronomical Society
5	1972	Melbourne	Astronomical Society of Victoria
6	1974	Bridgewater	Astronomical Society of South Australia
7	1976	Sydney	Astronomical Society of New South Wales
8	1978	Canberra	Canberra Astronomical Society
9	1980	Geelong	Astronomical Society of Geelong
10	1982	Brisbane	Astronomical Association of Queensland
11	1984	Perth	Astronomical Society of Western Australia
12	1986	Hobart	Astronomical Society of Tasmania
13	1988	Sydney	Astronomical Society of New South Wales British Astronomical Association (NSW Branch) Sutherland Astronomical Society
14	1990	Frankston	Astronomical Society of Frankston Astronomical Society of Victoria
15	1992	Adelaide	Astronomical Society of South Australia
16	1994	Canberra	Canberra Astronomical Society
17	1996	Brisbane	Astronomical Association of Queensland Southern Astronomical Society Brisbane Astronomical Society Southeast Queensland Astronomical Society
18	1998	Sutherland	Sutherland Astronomical Society
19	2000	Perth	Astronomy WA

2 Early conventions 1967-1970

The success of the First National Convention of Australian Amateur Astronomers is even more remarkable because it was organized by the JCAC and PAS from a distance without a local organization to back them up and so making quick visits to the ACT necessary. Another problem was that there was no seed funding and donations from the Societies were slow in arriving. The number of amateurs proposing to attend was not clear until late in the arrangements which was another complication for the Committee who had no precedent upon which to call. The venue was the upper level of the Australian National University Students' Union Building. There were eleven clubs from four states represented at the Convention:

James Cook Astronomy Club	Pacific Astronomical Society
Port Macquarie Astronomical Association	Astronomical Society of New South Wales
Illawarra Astronomical Society	Goulburn Astronomers Club
British Astronomical Association NSW Branch	Bundaberg Astronomical Society
Moreton Bay Astronomers Club	Ballaarat Astronomical Society
Astronomical Society of South Australia,	

some of the names of clubs appear differently in different accounts.

Friday, 1967 March 24 would have seen motor cars arriving in Canberra from the four states and by eight o'clock some fifty amateur astronomers had registered and gathered in the lecture hall to hear the first address (perhaps a pot-pourri) given to an Australian Convention of amateur astronomers by Ralph Sangster of South Australia when he spoke about an automatic grinding and polishing machine, a recently-found meteorite, and bonded lenses. The night also allowed registrants to view telescopes and accessories brought down for display. In all seven talks (see Appendix I, authors with year of first paper as 1967) were given by representatives from six clubs. During Saturday morning a photograph of as many as could be rounded up was taken by Ralph Sangster, Figure 2.

The official delegates were in the meantime holding a meeting as has been done at each convention since. The locations of the next three conventions were decided, and a set of guiding principles were established for host societies of subsequent conventions. This latter point was achieved after long and sometimes heated debate to avoid the word constitution and thus the formation of an over-riding body. The conventions were to be held biennially; however, for special reasons the next would be held in 1968 at Port Macquarie, and to avoid a New South Wales (NSW) monopoly the following ones to be in Ballarat, then Adelaide.



Figure 2. Amateurs attending the 1967 Convention in Canberra. Photograph by Ralph Sangster.

Saturday saw the only possible disappointing aspect of the convention when the group visited Mt. Stromlo Observatory; however, it was due to the last minute actions of Alex Rodgers in organizing an illustrated address by Don Matthewson that the visit was not the disaster feared upon arrival. It should be pointed out that the organizing committee commenced its operations and finished them during the change of Directors at Mt. Stromlo. "Bok was the first Mount Stromlo director to take seriously the role of public relations in the life of the observatory. ...Bok's successor ... was Olin Jeuck Eggen ... one of Eggen's first changes was to discontinue the Visitor's Nights." (Haynes *et al.*, 1996:176-179). Those of us who visited the Observatory in the 1960s can endorse these comments and sympathize with the organizers when the group was treated no better than tourists despite many efforts to secure a night visit to Mt. Stromlo. Don Gray, Deputy Station Master of Tidbinbilla filled in the evening with a talk on the functions of the deep space station.

As a further act of atonement, the near-full Moon put on a spectacular display on Easter Sunday. "Sunday morning at 9 o'clock the caravan assembled in Queanbeyen for the trip to the Hills Cross [*sic*]. The mile long silvery structure presented an imposing sight as it glittered in the moonlight on the dry bown [*sic*] plain." (Klingen, 1967). The Molonglo visit of two hours was followed by a picnic lunch at Cotter Dam on the way to Tidbinbilla, "... where we were received with open arms and accorded the kind of V.I.P. treatment we would have liked to experience at Mt. Stromlo" (Elwell, 1967). This was obviously one of the highlights of the weekend.

The final part of the convention was the dinner on Sunday evening accompanied by the usual speeches and parting discussions. The organizing committee was pleased to announce that the accounts (Table 2) balanced and that no further donations from clubs would be needed. The total amount passing through the account differs slightly from a current NACAA when many thousand of dollars pass through the treasurer's hands.

The outstanding success of this first convention, ignored by Australia's largest amateur society, set a standard for others with "a hard act to follow". Within a year it would all be on again on the mid-north coast of NSW at Port Macquarie, to coincide with its sequicentenary. The report of the organizing committee presented a Conclusion which appears in Appendix II.

During the intervening year between the conventions, Norm Webb of the Port Macquarie Astronomical Association (PMAA) travelled far and wide giving talks to astronomical clubs urging them

to send representatives to the 1968 Convention, and it was due to his untiring efforts and exuberant enthusiasm for the event that it was a success. He wrote letters to all parts of the world advising particulars of the convention and requesting support, something which is not done today. Some of the results of his efforts were made manifest when messages were read out on the first morning,

Table 2. Financial statement for First National Convention of Australian Amateur Astronomers, Easter 1967

		Receipts		Expenditure	
1966		Donations		1966/67	
	9/6	Port Macquarie	\$10.00		Stamps \$6.12
	1/7	Far North Queensland	10.00		Stationery 2.24
	5/9	Pacific Astr. Club	10.00		Telephone costs 15.65
	15/9	James Cook Astr. Club	10.00		Telegrams 0.95
	1/12	South Australia	10.00		Canberra visit 8.52
	14/12	Bundaberg	10.00		Tape 3.30
1967	23/1	Astr. Soc. of N.S.W.	10.00		Cheques 0.50
	30/1	Illawarra	10.00		Hall 80.00
	20/2	Ballarat	10.00		Sat. party 17.50
	26/02	B.A.A. of N.S.W.	10.00		Sun. dinner 127.50
	27/2	Moreton Bay	5.00		extra seats 6.00
		Dinners:			
		James Cook Astr. Club	45.00		
		Pacific Astr. Soc.	24.00		
		Ballarat	24.00		
		South Australia	6.10		
		Astr. Soc. of N.S.W.	3.00		
		Goulburn Astr. Club	9.00		
		Port Macquarie	6.00		
		Bundaberg	6.00		
		Illawarra	30.00		
		Registration	10.18		
			\$268.28		\$268.28

"... messages of goodwill were received from the Astronomer Royal – Sir Richard Wolley, Patrick Moore, Major General R.C.A. Edge – Director General of the Royal Ordnance Survey – Amateur Astronomers & etc. in Brazil, U.S.A., England, Germany, Austria, Mexico, South Africa the Vatican Astronomer & New Zealand – also from Astronomical Societies & persons in several parts of Australia." (Webb, 1968).

A Civic Welcome was extended by the Mayor of Port Macquarie, Alderman C C Adams and the Convention was officially opened by Harley Wood, NSW Government Astronomer, who also gave an address in which he conveyed valuable advice to the young men and women whose intention was to graduate as astronomers or allied professionals. Tidbinbilla was again present with Deputy Director, W A L Forsyth, giving the next talk on The Review of the Surveyor Program

Some seventeen talks were given by amateurs from far and near. It was pleasing to see that three metropolitan Melbourne amateurs gave talks, but they were not there as official representatives of the Astronomical Society of Victoria (ASV). Two of these were under twenty years of age and Michael Silver, aged 15, got support from Rotary to attend. Another supported attendee was David Harlos of Orlando, Florida, who read the announcement of the Convention in *Sky and Telescope*. David had distinguished himself in science and was prominent in his High School Astronomical Club, who made him its delegate to the Convention. Cars were washed, cakes were sold, raffles run, etc. and with the interest of the local newspaper two-thirds of his fare was raised. This qualified him for Government assistance and he flew to Australia to be the first amateur from America to attend an Australian convention.

About fifty people attended the Port Macquarie Convention and most may be seen outside the Observatory in Figure 3. The Convention was voted a success and it was noted the great amount of effort which had been put into making it so by the Organizing Committee and particularly Norm Webb.



Figure 3. The 1968 Convention group outside the Port Macquarie Observatory.

The resolutions passed at the Delegates' Meetings are only there to be ignored, for the biennial concept was thrown out the window with Sygmunt (Joe) Czyski inviting all and sundry to Ballarat in twelve months time and in the following year, 1970, the gathering would take place in Adelaide. Again a regional centre had put its hand up to host the gathering, still the big Societies were shunning the conventions.

There is something about the intimacy of rural towns and cities which make for special gatherings where it is not too far to anything nor too far to the homes of local amateurs who want to welcome you to them. Although a large provincial city Ballarat was cosy to be in with the locals. Joe Czyski of the Ballarat Astronomical Society (BASv) was nearly as hard-working as Norm Webb and wrote innumerable letters to all parts of the world, including Buckingham Palace. Note the spelling of the Society's name where the old official spelling is used and is still used today by its civic authorities, although Ballarat is used for the spelling of the shire. The home of the BASv is the Municipal Observatory at Mount Pleasant, a suburb of the City of Ballarat, where the third National Convention of Amateur Astronomers was held, the only municipal observatory in Australia.

The Third Convention was the whetting show for many Victorian amateurs who were supported by the ASV having appointed an official delegate, Hans Eisink, a former resident of Ballarat. Some of them are present in Perth thirty-one years on and still presenting papers after giving their first convention paper at Ballarat. There were ten papers delivered of which five were by ASV members with the others from various states. Included among the speakers was the first lady speaker at an Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers, Norma Breen (JCAC) read a paper on Planetary Atmospheres. All the papers were presented on the Saturday in three sessions and after the evening session many went up to Mt. Pleasant to observe through the 26-inch reflector and the 8-inch refractor.

The Delegates' Meeting was attended by most with the voting being restricted to one delegate from each state. After a lengthy debate, it was resolved that the conventions be held annually and that the next would be in Wollongong at Easter 1970. Norm Webb brought up the idea of an Australian society with a proper constitution, a grand lodge for the running of national conventions. Following another long discussion, John Perdrix suggested that the meeting appoint Tom Richards to carry out a feasibility study and give him the power to pick the necessary people to help. Tom Richards accepted the appointment providing he could expect help from the Victorian society, – it should be pointed out that Richards had recently arrived from New Zealand. This help was assured by the ASV President and the motion was passed which provided for a progress report being given in 1970. Although not recorded in the Minutes of the Delegates' Meeting, it was decided that delegates be sent by Australian societies to the next

conference of the International Union of Amateur Astronomers. The convention was closed by Councillor Bill Roff, a former Mayor of Ballarat and President of the BASv. Bill Roff will be remembered by those who attended the dinner following the re-opening of the Municipal Observatory in 1958 when Bill told us that the 26-inch mirror had been re-silvered at Mt. Stromboli.

The last of the early conventions was hosted by the Illawarra Astronomical Society (IAS) and held in the regional city of Wollongong in the Lecture Hall of the Arts, Commerce and Science Section at the Wollongong University College. The hard-working organizing committee was headed by Laurie Brown ably assisted by Bill Ede who produced a short report on the Fourth National Amateur Astronomer's [*sic*] Convention, Easter 1970, also designated elsewhere as the Fourth Australian National Convention of Amateur Astronomers. The convention was a social, environs, and financial success; however, the authors of the report were critical of the small number (8) of papers offered, very poor response by societies to correspondence (nothing has changed), the last minute cancellation of the Mars Symposium, and the report of the Feasibility Study Group (Richards, 1970) presented by John Perdrix, a member of the group. This report recommended that no national body be set up for the present, Laurie Brown was an enthusiastic supporter of a national body instead a group of amateur societies having little, if any, contact with each other.

Easter Sunday morning contained two talks and the Delegates' Meeting which decided that the conventions should be held biennially (believe it or not, after a change at each Delegates' Meeting, this was the last change) with the 1972 Convention to be hosted by the ASV and held in Melbourne. Following a talk on The Dapto Radio Astronomy Station, attendees visited the station some fifteen kilometres south of Wollongong, Figure 4.



Figure 4. Fourth Convention members at Dapto Radio Station.

Easter Day came to an end when we all assembled at the El-Jaye Motel for a pleasant evening repast, a few, well-chosen, short speeches, and then to the IAS club-house for viewing and a look at the Apollo 11 film. Monday was an opportunity for registrants to gather again at the Wollongong University College to 'chew the fat' with a Recapitulation and Discussion period. It was a successful convention and a credit to the organizing committee headed by Brown and Ede. This time there was to be a gap of two years allowing time for better organization and recruitment of paper presenters.

3 NACAA is born

Depending upon when and where you lived, the arrival of a comet was considered the harbinger of either good or bad news. The 1972 Convention was destined to be a success for Bill Bradfield had just discovered another comet, a NACAA comet. After a break of two years, this convention got a new name which has remained until the present time. The name needed to have a catchy acronym, like APEC or ASEAN, and this was forthcoming when Perdrix rearranged pieces of cardboard each with the letter of a suitable word. It took a few hours with new words and finally there it was the National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers – NACAA – and you will be knackered if you forget it. The 1972 Convention was the first to be held at a venue which offered accommodation as well as conference facilities. It was also fortunate that a few on the organizing committee had had experience in their professional careers with running conferences. The fifth convention saw the first issue of a *Proceedings* of the convention a feature which has continued to the present day. So NACAA saw the beginning of a number of innovative features, all of which have become part of our biennial get-together. The obligatory convention satchel was introduced and supplied by Monty Ash of Astro Optical Supplies, so the first NACAA saw a revolutionary change from the previous ones and the start of many excellent ones to come.

The opening address was given by Perdrix, who spoke on The Amateur in Science, in which he discussed the scientific approach and the role played by several amateurs in the discipline of astronomy. The official opening was performed by the Rt Hon. A A Calwell, former leader of the Federal Opposition. Not only did he fulfill this function, but he also instructed and entertained the participants as only he could in his own inimitable manner. Figure 5 shows the official opening after which Bruce Tregaskis responded on behalf of the host society, the ASV.

Eighteen papers were presented during the two and a half days by members of six societies, with members the host society giving ten papers. On the Saturday evening, we all caught a tram into the city and spent time at a private showing in the H V McKay Planetarium with Ron Cavill and Dave Marshall



Figure 5. Rt Hon. Arthur A Calwell (standing) opening the 5th NACAA with left to right S D Chivers, J L Perdrix, and T B Tregaskis.

operating the Goto projector. Although hard to believe, it was a fine evening in Melbourne, so a number of 'Nacaarians' hopped on a tram and went to the Old Melbourne Observatory site and made use of the ASV's 310-mm reflector and 80-mm refractor as well as the Museum's 200-mm refractor originally purchased for the 1874 transit of Venus. The social event of the Easter gathering was the Convention Dinner on the Sunday evening when sixty participants and guests enjoyed sumptuous meal, good company, and fellowship. By midday Monday it was all over for another two years with "See you in Adelaide in '74." An enlargement of the 1972 Convention photograph was displayed at the 1998 NACAA in Sutherland to try and find out the names of those present; however, our memories are getting shorter for only about three-quarters could be named.

The Delegates' Meeting was not as spirited as some earlier ones with the ideas of a constitution, federation, and time interval between conventions not discussed. Ten societies were present with a representative from Western Australia for the first time and a further ten years before another was present. There was still the ideas of co-operation between societies with the exchange of library holdings, rapid transmission of astronomical discoveries, honorary membership to visiting amateurs from interstate while they were holidaying. Suggestions were made for the next NACAA when the Astronomical Society of South Australia (ASSA) offered to host the event in 1974.

In the intervening years, The Berenice Page medal was inaugurated by the Astronomical Society of Australia (ASA) in 1972 in memory of Mrs Berenice Page, a foundation member of the Society. The award recognizes excellence in original work in amateur astronomy in Australia and its territories. The assessment committee looks for scientific contributions which have served to advance astronomy. In particular, the award is not made in recognition of organizational services, for popularization, or solely for proficiency in established techniques.

The award, consisting of a bronze medal, is made by the ASA Council at intervals of approximately two years. The medal is usually presented by a member of the ASA Council at the biennial National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers (NACAA). Table 3 lists the recipients of the Berenice Page Medal.

Table 3. List of Berenice Page Medal Winners

Year	Recipient	Astronomical work for award
1973	Sydney Elwin	For photometric observations of the occultation of β Scorpii by Jupiter
1975	David Herald	For observations of Bailey Beads in the solar eclipse of 1974 June 20
1978	no award	
1980	no award	
1982	Bill Bradfield	For the discovery, up to that time, of eleven comets
1984	Byron Soulsby	For work on the oblateness of the umbral shadow
1986	Robert Evans	For visual discoveries of supernovae
1988	Robert McNaught	For photographic nova and supernova observations and discoveries
1990	Barry Adcock	For telescope design work and planetary observations
1992	Mal Wilkinson	For the design and construction of a radio-telescope and subsequent observations of the Io-Jupiter system and for his development of a model for the emissions
1994	Paul Camilleri	For discoveries of novae and Mira variables and the development of simple photographic techniques for nova
1996	Peter Williams	For his extensive on-going visual observations of variable stars, especially the R Coronae Borealis variables searches
1998	Gordon Garradd	For significant contributions in the observation of asteroids, comets, novae and supernovae

The ASSA took up the suggestion of the 1972 Delegates' Meeting to make the theme of the VI NACAA Astronomy and Education and what better establishment could they have chosen than Raywood, the In-service Conference Centre of the Education Department of South Australia at Bridgewater, a south-eastern Adelaide suburb. With the pattern set in Melbourne, the convention went along without any hitches after the opening by the Hon. Hugh Hudson, Minister for Education in South Australia, who referred to the part played by astronomical knowledge in guiding the fast clipper ships with their cargoes of wheat and wool which contributed so much to the growth of Australia.

The proportion of papers presented by members of the host society grew from 55% in Melbourne to 75 % in Adelaide, and only two-thirds as many papers. There were plenty of activities to educate and entertain the visitors who went to the ASSA Observatory, the Zeiss Planetarium of the South Australian

Institute of Technology at The Levels, and individual observatories belonging to members of ASSA. An Open Forum session was held, as suggested at the last Delegates' Meeting, which proved very popular. The attendance was, unfortunately, restricted to fifty, the maximum capacity of Raywood and this was not conveyed to the organizers until it was too late to change the venue.

The Delegates' Meeting accepted the offer of the Astronomical Society of New South Wales (ASNSW) to host the VII NACAA, whilst the ASV would host a seminar following the 1976 October total solar eclipse. There was still the hope by some delegates that more co-operation and possible federation could take place between societies. It was at Wollongong in 1970 that Bill Ede and Laurie Brown were so disappointed with the Richards (1970) report, delivered by Perdrix, stating that union was not on for the present; however, Ede was still promoting the idea of a Secretariat to facilitate the transfer of information between societies. The IAS took over the running of same for the next two years.

The lack of documentation of some of the next NACAAs and the lack of answers from the societies who hosted or co-hosted conventions makes it very difficult to complete this history accurately, so it shall remain to be completed when the author can travel to the Eastern States to try and find journals, bulletins, newsletters, and correspondence in some societies. Table 1 lists the remaining locations for the conventions.

Discussion

It can be seen from the very first convention that for some twenty years there were constant moves to promote co-operation and some sort of federation to share resources amongst the amateur clubs of Australia and perhaps New Zealand. The mixed membership of the RASNZ with both professionals and amateurs together with the affiliation of most amateur societies with the RASNZ showed what could be done across the Tasman and that there was not a great need for them to be involved in an Australasian organization. The Feasibility Study carried out in 1969-1970 by Richards, Whitby, and Perdrix effectively put paid to the idea of the formation of an Australia-wide astronomical body (Richards, 1970). The possible formation of a federation – like the Astronomical League in the US or the Federation of Astronomical Societies in the UK – favoured by some amateurs was never accepted by the larger societies who were afraid of losing their independence and dominance.

It should be pointed out that NACAA does not exist, it is solely an acronym used to designate a biennial get-together. Whilst it is not suggested that the above idea be resurrected, it is felt that NACAA needs a home. A repository where one can find copies of the Minutes of previous Delegates' Meetings, Programme and Abstracts booklets, convention photographs, and all the other bits and pieces which would have made the task of scribing this preliminary history a lot easier. All that is needed is a cupboard or locker in a permanent place.

Another award was introduced in 1986 by Astral Press, publishers of the *Australian Journal of Astronomy*, for the best paper presentation at each NACAA. It started as a clock mounted on a piece of polished West Australian iron oxide and became a silver medallion in 1990 and has continued since. Table 4 lists the recipients of the Astral Award. One of the sponsors of the 1988 NACAA offered a prize for the best paper, so that year the Astral Award was an encouragement award.

Table 4. Recipients of the Astral Award 1986-1998

Year	Recipient	Title of Paper
1986	Tom Cragg	CV Aquarii
1988	Peter Jones	Computer star maps
1990	Peter Nelson (speaker), JL Blanksby & AW Kruijshoop	Recent planetary and lunar occultation observations by the Occultation of the ASV
1992	Peter Nelson (speaker) and Jim Park	Observing mutual phenomena of Jupiter's moons 1991
1994	Fraser Farrell	The recruitment and supervision of amateur variable star observers
1996	Zac Pujic	The Cookbook CB245 CCD camera: evaluation of performance
1998	Vello Tabur	Computer-aided comet hunting

Conclusion

The amateur astronomical community of Australia owes a lot to the endeavours of Elaine Polglase and Joe Kawalski whose idea these conventions were, together with John McGregor and L G Klingen who did the majority of the hard work in getting the first one up and going without a precedent. This started

the sequence of our conventions to which we all look forward. If it may be permitted, the following are some thoughts which it is felt would improve the concept of NACAA.

- The Convention Dinner should revert to the Sunday evening to allow one member of each society present to express in a few words his thoughts on the convention, and to add that final touch to a successful and happy weekend for the Monday is often a lost day.
- The Delegates' Meeting be held on either late Saturday afternoon or early Sunday morning. This will permit Delegates to lobby for their pet idea and allow them to enjoy the Friday evening reception to the full with everyone else.
- That the host society write a report of the convention which should be sent to all other societies, but in particular be deposited in a repository which I hope will eventual following NACAA 2000.
- That a NACAA satchel with all its goodies be deposited in this repository together with a copy of the group photograph and any other memorabilia which could help future historians.

References

- Elwell, C.P., 1967. First National Convention of Australian Amateur Astronomers. *Transit*, June (1967):8-10.
- Haynes, Raymond, Haynes, Roslynn, Malin, David and McGee, Richard, 1996. *Explorers of the southern sky – A history of Australian astronomy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Klingen, L.G., 1967. *Proceedings of the first National Convention of Amateur Astronomers held at Canberra in the Australian National University Union Building Easter 1967*. Dated 10th May 1967.
- Richards, T.J., 1970. Should we unite – a report. *Journal of the Astronomical Society of Victoria*, **23**(4):71-72.
- Webb, J.N., 1968. *Report on the Proceedings of the Second National Convention of Australian Amateur Astronomers held at the Observatory Port Macquarie N.S.W. during Easter 1968*.

Notes

- 1 The James Cook Astronomers Club was formed in 1961 and for want of a better term at present amalgamated with the Pacific Astronomical Society and ultimately became the Sutherland Astronomical Society.
- 2 The Canberra Astronomical Society referred to in the 1965 letter was the second so-named society and the present one, the third, was formed in 1969.
- 3 The Pacific Astronomical Society was formed in 1961 under similar circumstances to the JCAC as breakaway groups from the Sydney Amateur Astronomers which in turn was a breakaway from the BAA NSW Branch. Early in 1972 it was amalgamated with the JCAC.

Appendix I. Paper authors, number written, and year of first paper presented during 1967-1998.

Author	No. of Papers	Year of 1st paper	Author	No. of Papers	Year of 1st paper
Adcock, Barry	14	1969	Heyman, Jos	1	1984
Alexander, Cass	1	1968	Holmes, Kerry	1	1994
Allison, Andrew	2	1972	Hudson, Gordon	1	1998
Anderson, Peter	1	1996	Ibbetson, Kent	1	1998
Archer,	1	1967	Irvine, Chris	1	1968
Ashe, Ron	1	1984	Irving, C	1	1970
Austin, Rod	1	1970	Jackson, Ken	1	1982
Ball, Lindsay	1	1982	James, Andrew	5	1970
Barclay, Jim	2	1982	Kellock, Gerry	1	1982
Bembrick, Col	6	1982	Lanigan-O'Keeffe, Robert	5	1969
Benjamin, Thomas	1	1976	Lawrence, Reg	1	1984
Bhathal, Ragbir	1	1996	Le Marquand, Arthur	1	1976
Bisdee, Colin	1	1972	Leach, Tim	1	1996
Bland, A A	1	1990	Lee, Steve	2	1980
Blanksby, James	1	1990	Leiba, Marion	2	1990
Blow, Graham	1	1982	Loveday, Nick	3	1978
Bobroff, Peter	1	1994	Lowe, Peter	1	1994
Bosher, James	1	1974	Lukaszzyk, Igor	1	1996
Bradfield, Bill	8	1972	Lumley, Ted	3	1972
Brakel, Albert	1	1994	MacDonald, Alistair	2	1968
Breen, Norma	1	1969	Manietta, Siegfried	1	1996
Bridge, B J	1	1982	Marshall, Dave	1	1968
Briggs, G	1	1972	Mathers, S W	1	1972
Bryan, James	1	1990	Mattingly, Ross	1	1968
Cable, Ron	1	1968	May, Ed	1	1984
Caldwell, Peter	1	1994	Moy, Mike	1	1996
Callow, John	1	1984	Mazur, F	1	1972
Carroll, Bruce	1	1998	McMillan, Brett	1	1992
Chatfield, Clive	1	1972	McNamara, Geoff	1	1988
Clark, Barry	3	1969	McNaught, Rob	1	1998
Clarke, Rod	1	1978	McQuistan, Gavin	1	1974
Cook, J L	1	1970	Miller, David	2	1992
Cook, Keith	1	1967	Morel, Mati	1	1990
Coombs, Arthur	1	1972	Morland, John	1	1994
Cooper, Kevin	1	1976	Moser, W	2	1968
Cragg, Tom	3	1980	Moy, Daniel	1	1994
Crook, Brian	2	1996	Naughton, Merv	1	1980
Crump, D	1	1980	Nelson, Peter	3	1990
Czynski, Joe	1	1968	Nooriafshar, Mehryar	1	1996
Daggar, Dave	2	1982	Norman, Peter	6	1976
Davies, Geoff	2	1984	Orchiston, Wayne	7	1982
Davies, Graham	1	1998	Page, Arthur	5	1980
Dodd, Luke	1	1996	Park, Jim	5	1984
Doran, Bernie	1	1982	Pattie, Steve	2	1986
Dunn, John	1	1968	Perdrix, John	14	1969
Dyke, Norm	1	1984	Piazza, Alan	1	1970
Edelman, Howard	3	1972	Poppleton, Bruce	1	1984
Elwell, P	1	1967	Potter, Dennis	1	1969
Elwin, Syd	3	1968	Price, Robert	1	1978
Evans, Robert	3	1986	Pujic, Zac	2	1996
Farrell, Fraser	1	1994	Purcell, Patrick	1	1996
Fielding, G	1	1967	Purvinskis, Rob	1	1998
Forbes, Keith	1	1988	Reich, M	1	1972
Gardner, John	1	1976	Reimers, Chris	2	1994
Genet, Russell	1	1982	Richards, Tom	3	1969
George, Martin	1	1986	Ring, Steven	1	1996
Goodman, Dennis	1	1982	Rochford, Kevin	1	1969
Halpin, Terry	1	1982	Rost, Fred	1	1998
Hardy, Stephen	1	1980	Royer, Ronald	1	1990
Harlos, David	1	1968	Rumbelow, Dennis	1	1974
Harries-Harris, Eric	1	1974	Russell, Steve	3	1978
Harrison, Ken	3	1986	Ryder, Jeff	1	1982
Herald, David	12	1976	Sallur, Brian	1	1984
Herbert, Wayne	1	1984	Sangster, Ralph	1	1967

Paper authors, number written, and year of first paper presented during 1967-1998 (concluded).

Author	No. of Papers	Year of 1st paper	Author	No. of Papers	Year of 1st paper
Selby, Keith	1	1976	Trainor, Jim	3	1976
Silver, Michael	1	1968	Tregaskis, Bruce	7	1972
Simmonds, Ed	2	1976	Tregear, Bert	1	1972
Skilton, Peter	1	1994	Turner, Lincoln	1	1998
Smith, Trent	1	1984	Walker, Stan	2	1994
Soulsby, Byron	11	1976	Walters, Brian	1	1992
Sprott, Graham	2	1972	Ward, Keith	1	1996
Stockdale, Chris	2	1992	Webb, Norm	1	1969
Sullivan, Ian	1	1998	Whitby, Len	1	1970
Sumner, Bruce	2	1972	Wilkinson, Mal	3	1984
Sved, J	1	1972	Williams, Nick	1	1996
Tabur, Vello	2	1996	Wilson, Ian	1	1996
Taylor, Mark	2	1976	Wolf, Mick	4	1974
Thompson, Gregg	4	1980	Yates, Alan	1	1976
Thornhill, Wal	2	1988	York, Albert	2	1967
Trainor, D C	1	1968			

Appendix II

Conclusion from Klingen (1967)

We may safely say that the convention was a success and that this was due to the pleasant manner and co-operation of every member who attended. It furthermore has achieved the main objectives:

- (a) exchange of information among members;
- (b) determining the times and place of three successive conventions;
- (c) in accepting a set of principles to serve as "Rules of the game" for future conventions;
- (d) in widening our horizons and promoting the cause of amateur astronomy.

From the organising point of view we would like to make following comments.

- (1) It would be helpful if clubs could send in their donations as early as possible after the organising club has sent a budget statement of expected costs. In our case contributions and donations were received 8 months after we sent the first letter and 3 months before the function, so that all preparations had to be-made in a hurry.
- (2) We frequently found that delegates who were to keep the members of their clubs posted on the developments of the convention had omitted to do so. There were instances where frustrated members tried to contact the organising committee direct because they had not seen one of the five circulars that were sent to each club.
- (3) Although this is left to the discretion of every club, we feel that the organising committee, which is duly appointed by and responsible to the host club, should at least be made up of the following people:
 - (a) a chairman who shall president the meetings of the committee;
 - (b) a secretary-treasurer to keep records of funds and handle the correspondence;
 - (c) a program-convenor who shall be responsible for organising the program, contact lecturers, etc.
 - (d) a secretary to type and duplicate all letters.

Most of the burden of this convention was borne by John McGregor, myself and last but not least my wife Tineke, who handled all the correspondence and kept check of the accounts. This was strenuous at times and other club members then came to the rescue.

- (4) It would be an advantage if people who want to present papers and films would submit to the organising committee several months in advance the contents and exact duration of their presentation. This will enable the program-convenor to compile an interesting set of lectures. If possible copies of the talks could be distributed to the clubs beforehand so that they have ample time to prepare questions.
- (5) We estimate the total amount of work involved at about 600 manhours - this includes everything - writing letters - contacting people, etc. This is equivalent to having 4 people work Saturday morning for one year.
- (6) Lastly we think that Easter may after all be the time when most people have least commitments.

We would like to end this report by thanking all the members once more and the Australian National University Union staff for their efforts in helping to make this convention a success.

for The Organising committee (sgd) L.G. Klingen.