



The ARC Centre of Excellence for All-sky Astrophysics (CAASTRO) was funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) for the period 2011-2017. It is led by The University of Sydney, in conjunction with its collaborating Universities: The Australian National University, Curtin University, The University of Melbourne, The University of Queensland, Swinburne University of Technology and The University of Western Australia, and complemented by a strong group of Australian and international partner institutions.

In 2017 CAASTRO was awarded the first ever GOLD Pleiades Award by the Astronomical Society of Australia. We recognise that while we have been successful, there is still a lot more work to be done.

From its establishment in early 2011, the CAASTRO Executive has considered itself a force for change in the gender arena and has had strong oversight of gender initiatives and the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and outcomes. The CAASTRO Gender Action Committee was formed in 2013 with Professor Brian Schmidt as the Chair. From the time of its formation, CAASTRO identified several areas in which there were opportunities to improve, and has introduced initiatives to do so.

These initiatives include, but are not limited to: changes to recruitment practices, increased workplace flexibility (part-time work, and hours), improved conference participation (Chairs, Speakers, Committees, Code of Conduct), child-care at conferences and workshops, travel allowances for families, mentoring, a code of conduct, an allies program, and general support on issues that can hamper the ability of women or carers to fully participate in their field.

The CAASTRO Gender Action Committee has provided oversight of CAASTRO's gender initiatives since 2013, with a goal of creating new initiatives to implement positive change for women in their careers. It has monitored the conduct of the organisation in relation to gender equity over this time. The committee has broad representation from our membership across our collaborating and partner organisations, and members regularly rotate off after a period of two to three years to ensure fresh ideas/views or diversity of membership. The creation of the CAASTRO Gender Action Committee has fast-tracked many of our gender initiatives.

A committed team of CAASTRO staff has met regularly over the past years to identify, monitor the conduct of the organisation in relation to gender equity, and implement positive changes for women. CAASTRO's founding Director, Professor Bryan Gaensler, was a vocal advocate for gender equality, and from 2011 until 2013 the CAASTRO Executive Committee had this monitoring role, and regularly discussed gender issues and established guidelines on fostering gender equality within CAASTRO. The current Director, Professor Elaine Sadler, has continued to drive this vision.

When the CAASTRO Executive became aware that it was not achieving the targets it had set, it established the CAASTRO Gender Action Committee in 2013. Led by Nobel Laureate Brian Schmidt, this committee contributes to the development of strategies to meet the Gender Action challenges that we face. It reviews CAASTRO's performance against a number of gender-related KPIs, including: the number of women at various levels within CAASTRO, the number of female-led CAASTRO sponsored workshops, the number of female CAASTRO visitors, gender targets for speakers and SOC roles in conferences and workshops, the number of females who apply for jobs, and the number short-listed.

CAASTRO sets and measures against a number of gender-related KPIs, including: the number of women at various levels within CAASTRO, the number of female-led CAASTRO sponsored workshops, the number of female CAASTRO visitors, gender targets for speakers and SOC roles in conferences and workshops, the number of females who apply for jobs and those who are short-listed. Gender-based metrics are compiled every 12 months for review by the Gender Action Committee.

The Committee has an extensive and focussed Action Plan, and its impact is measured by KPIs. Some of our initiatives that have had a positive impact on gender equality have been:



Name: Part-time jobs

Role: In 2011 the CAASTRO Executive approved all CAASTRO jobs being advertised as being available either on a full-time or part-time basis.

Impact: Currently 90% of professional staff and 17% of research staff have taken up the option of part-time work. In at least two cases a female researcher has explicitly stated that this flexibility has allowed her to remain employed in astronomy, and one has been awarded a DECRA and an ongoing position. The policy applies equally to all employees (that is, we are also assisting men who have caring responsibilities).

Name: Increased travel allowances and child care options

Role: CAASTRO provides travel allowances to enable members to attend meetings, workshops and conferences with their children and family. Childcare options are provided for important conferences.

Impact: CAASTRO has been providing travel support for families since 2012 and this option has been used by six families on a regular basis. This is particularly helpful for early-career researchers in astronomy who have both young children and partners who work. CAASTRO now provides free childcare at all our conferences. It caters for overseas participants as well as for locals (German and Japanese children have attended, for instance).

Name: Conference/Workshop Gender Targets

Role: The CAASTRO Gender Action Committee requires organisers to set and account for gender targets for conference and workshop participation where they are seeking CAASTRO sponsorship. These targets cover female representation on the organising committees, speakers and participants.

Impact: Applications for CAASTRO funded Conferences and Workshops will only be approved once gender targets are set for the LOC, SOC, Invited Speakers, and contributed speakers. Successful applicants are required to report back on the gender outcomes of the event. The majority of workshops have achieved gender targets in the range of 40%-50% for female participation in attendance, SOC, Speakers and Chairs.

Name: CAASTRO Mentoring Program

Role: The CAASTRO Mentoring program was established in 2012 and involves all levels of the organisation. There has been a strong focus on matching senior women and junior women in mentoring pairs where possible.

Impact: The mentoring scheme has given women within CAASTRO increased career support. This has been demonstrated by the roles our Alumni have taken, which includes postdoctoral roles at University of Oslo, University College London, Astron and the University of Waterloo

Name: Supporting Gender Balance Policy

Role: CAASTRO has developed a policy that encourages female applicants to apply for any CAASTRO role, and which outlines the family-friendly policies currently in place to support CAASTRO members. The latter include a commitment to equal pay (including PhD support).

Impact: This policy has resulted in more female applicants for CAASTRO roles, and a small rise in the number of successful female postdocs.

Since CAASTRO's inception the proportion of women on its Executive has grown from 0% at the start to 38% in 2013 to its current 55%. CAASTRO has a female Director, Professor Elaine Sadler and 38% of our Chief Investigators are now women.

Professor Elaine Sadler is a strong advocate for gender equality speaking in many forums. She has a regular presentation of gender goals and initiatives to all members at the Annual Retreat. Professor Bryan Gaensler, founding Director of CAASTRO, was also a strong role model and advocate for gender equity issues.