

## **SENATOR KIM CARR / ALAN CARPENTER - JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

**9 APRIL 2008**

### **Australia reaffirms its commitment to SKA at the International SKA Forum, Perth.**

Senator Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and Western Australian Premier Alan Carpenter today reinforced Australia's commitment to the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescope at the opening of an International SKA Forum in Perth.

The forum is the largest gathering of all the players - scientists, industry and politicians - to come together to plan this critical and inspiring project.

It is also one of the biggest ever gatherings of the world's leading astronomers, with directors of the world's leading radio astronomy bodies from Europe, United States and Asia-Pacific attending, along with representatives from 19 countries.

Australia is one of just two locations left in the race (Southern Africa is the other) to host the \$2 billion international project to build a next generation radio telescope.

The SKA will be up to 50 times more sensitive than the best present-day instruments, giving astronomers remarkable insights into the formation of the universe and addressing some of the most fundamental unanswered questions in physics and astronomy.

Senator Carr said:

"The SKA project will provide a significant boost to innovation across Australia, building capacity that will benefit the research community and industry.

"It will intensify international collaboration and create high-skill, high-wage jobs for half a century."

Mr Carpenter reaffirmed the Western Australian Government's commitment to hosting the SKA with the Federal Government by saying:

"The SKA project has the potential to change the way we see the world. And WA will be providing world-renowned expertise from our very own specialists including the Premier's Fellows Professor Peter Quinn and Professor Lister Staveley-Smith, based at the University of Western Australia (UWA); Professor Ken Freeman, a UWA Professor-at-Large; and Professor Steven Tingay and Professor Peter Hall from Curtin University."

"Australia is firmly committed to the SKA initiative and is working hard with the international community to ensure its success."

The Western Australian Government has committed \$29.3 million for radio astronomy developments in the state and the Australian Government has also provided \$118.5 million to help meet some of the key technology and engineering development requirements of the SKA.

Both Senator Carr and Mr Carpenter said the cooperative national approach reflected the utmost importance Australia placed on the SKA and its determination to bring such an important scientific initiative to life.

A final decision on which country will host the SKA is expected in 2012.

Media contacts:

Catriona Jackson, Minister Carr's Office, 0417 142 238

Vanessa Joynt, Premier Carpenter's Office, (08) 9222 9475 Mob: 0418 917 754