



IAA SETI Committee – Notes from the Chair (version 13 October 2025)

Meeting: IAC 2025, Sydney – Wednesday 1 October 2025, 10:00–13:00

Location: ICC Sydney, Room E3.9 (Hybrid: In-person + Zoom)

Welcome

The Chair (Mike Garrett, MAG) opened the meeting by thanking participants for attending in person and online. Acknowledgement was also given to the indigenous peoples and traditional custodians of the land for their generosity in hosting us. The hybrid format again worked well, ensuring the opportunity for participation across the community.

Thanks to Breakthrough Listen and in particular Steve Croft and Dave McMahon for looking after the zoom connection. We plan to make a recording of the meeting available to members. Andrew Siemion promptly provided the meeting assets generated by zoom. There were about 35 people present in-person and 12 people attending remotely.

Documentation for the meeting was made available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/gn5svusk5wzeg9p7xfjcg/AMuRLJXKAp-1CFMlxSJv5U?rlkey=zukur8kk7nfweybmvyvm1w94c&dl=0>

[We are still happy to accept additional contributions to the documentation by speakers/presenters for a complete record of the meeting].

Previous IAA SC Meeting

The 2024 Milan meeting notes from the chair were noted (see docs). These highlighted our strong presence at IAC 2024, with SETI sessions attracting > 100 participants each, and progress made on the revision of the Post-Detection Protocols.

MAG and Lori Walton have been updating the members email distribution list and the members excel sheet. We have made good progress but we may still have some old email addresses in there – if your email changes, please let myself and Lori know.

In Memoriam

We remembered two distinguished colleagues: Claudio Maccone (1948–2025) and Alexander Ollongren (1928–2025). Both were honoured with tributes from colleagues, and members reflected on their profound legacies. The IAA President, Jean-Michel Contant was also present to pay tribute to Claudio's wider contribution to the IAA.

Chair's Report

Key points from the Chair's presentation:



- SETI sessions at IAC 2025 (A4.1 and A4.2) were again well attended – IAC 2025 was smaller than IAC 2024 but there were still around 50 people in attendance at each session.
- Committee members remain active in many IAA activities – e.g. expert support of the Board of Trustees and participation in the Acta Astronautica editorial board.
- Lori Walton and Nicolo Antonietti were elected as full members of the IAA (academicians) at the recent IAA Academy Day and Dinner in Sydney.
- Challenges persist due to delays in new IAA Committee Terms of Reference, which currently prevent appointment of new members. The IAA CEO has indicated that by this time next year, these issues should be resolved and new members can be appointed. We are very much looking forward to this opportunity as many members of the community want to be involved.

Report to Commission 1

The IAA SETI Committee chair had reported through the year to IAA Commission 1 (see docs). Highlights included:

- Substantial progress on the revised Post-Detection Protocol (PDP) draft.
- Community consultations in May and August 2025, yielding strong engagement in the PDP update process.
- Plans to present the new PDP draft to members for approval after IAC 2025.

Upcoming Meetings & Events

IAUS404, Advancing the Search for Technosignatures, 2–6 March 2026 (N.B. deadline for abstracts is 16 October - <https://iaus404.bmsis.org/> [iaus404.bmsis.org]).

IAA SETI Symposium at IAC 2026, Antalya, Türkiye, 5–9 October 2026.

IAUS407, Origins 2026, Paris, 5–10 July 2026.

There are plans by our colleagues in Italy to organize a SETI workshop (similar in scope to the recent meeting in Sardinia) just before the IAC 2026 (September). More information to follow.

Global SETI Developments

We heard short updates from:

- Breakthrough Listen (Jamie Drew).
- SETI Institute (Bill Diamond).
- SETI Italia (Jader Monari & Andrea Melis).
- PANOSSETI (Dan Werthimer).
- UCLA SETI (Jean-Luc Margot).
- SETI China (Tong-Jie Zhang).
- SETI@Manchester (Mike Garrett).

These highlighted vibrant, globally distributed activity, with new facilities and projects complementing one another.

ACTION ITEM: Tong-Jie Zhang was encouraged to circulate a written report on the many activities now ongoing in China. (see documentation update).



Post-Detection Discussions

- General Developments: Kathryn Denning (KD) reviewed global initiatives, an overview of post-detection development activities (see docs), highlighting the importance of international collaboration and contributions from ECR. The workshop organised by the NASA Astrobiology Program, Communicating Discoveries in the Search for Life in the Universe (CDSLU) was also noted. KD discussed the revision of the Declaration of Principles, the establishment of a new research initiative at the SETI Institute focused on discovery and society, and various ongoing activities and initiatives related to post-detection science. KD emphasised the need for more interdisciplinary expertise and better gender representation on the committee. Hopefully these issues can be addressed when new IAA SC members can be appointed next year.
- PDP Consultation & Next Steps: MAG summarised the 2025 consultation process, noting strong support (>70% rated the draft 8+/10) and fairly diverse demographics of respondents. The process going forward was also presented. The goal is for the IAA SC to approve the new Draft protocols by the end of this year via an anonymous electronic vote. MAG made some very limited evaluation of the Helios system (<https://vote.heliosvoting.org/>) which seems to be popular in academic settings.
- **ACTION ITEM:** IAA members to give any feedback they might have on the use of anonymous electronic voting systems.
- The PDP draft will be approved via a simple majority of those casting a voting – the system will be open for a significant period e.g. 2 weeks. If progress is made in this, the IAA Board of Trustees will be asked to endorse the document. A presentation of the approved document would then occur during IAC 2026.
- MAG highlighted the importance that this committee should be in the forefront of developing best practice for SETI research activities, and yet be open and transparent to the work that is ongoing in many other different settings (see KD presentation).
- Les Tennen introduced the current September 2025 version of the Draft Declaration of Principles in more detail. The membership was asked for feedback. The main feedback included the need for a good communications plan to be developed asap.

ACTION ITEM: Nelly Ben Hayoun suggested that a contact email address be added to the document. There was wide-spread support for this.

ACTION ITEM: For the PDP Task Group to develop a communications plan with input from other experts – SETI Committee member Andrew Fraknoi volunteered to assist. It was suggested that other experts in the community e.g. at the SETI Institute etc. should also be approached.

[Further comments were received after the meeting, also via e-mail].



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ACTION ITEM: For the PDP Task Group to collect together the last comments from the membership, develop and circulate the final version of the draft principles, and organise a vote for formal adoption.

ACTION ITEM: For the PDP Task Group to develop a communications plan with input from other experts – SETI Committee member Andrew Fraknoi volunteered to assist. It was suggested that other experts in the community e.g. at the SETI Institute etc. should also be approached.

Various members of the committee had been impressed by the importance of storytelling – something that had been highlighted at this IAC in the context of indigenous people. It would be interesting to see how we could learn from this approach in terms of communicating the PDPs to a wider audience.

Any Other Business

Bill Diamond and Simon Steel extended an open invitation to the SETI Institute event later that evening for meeting participants.

A group photo was taken (see below). Members were thanked for their contributions to what was generally considered an important, constructive and forward-looking meeting.

The meeting was conducted under the IAF Code of Conduct.

These notes are intended as a summary of the meeting and were made by the IAA SC chair, Mike Garrett (MAG).

