

**June 2001**

**QUT to manage first NASA-sponsored remote telescope**

June 4, 2001

NASA has chosen QUT to manage the installation of the space agency's first sponsored, remote-controlled educational telescope in Australia.

The telescope, to be built at a site in Nanango Shire north-west of Brisbane, will provide students from Queensland and around the world with their own window to the stars when it is launched later this year.

It will form part of a network with sites in the United States and Chile, allowing international collaboration between school groups and advanced learning for QUT's astrophysics and engineering students.

NASA-sponsored Telescopes In Education Foundation director Gilbert Clark said students would control the telescope remotely via an Internet connection and then could exchange the data with their counterparts overseas.

"The potential for the students is limited only by the imagination of those involved," Mr Clark said.

"We have already had two variable stars discovered by students [in the United States], so anything is possible.

"The Telescopes In Education program enables students to increase their knowledge of astronomy and astrophysics and strengthen their critical thinking skills."

Lecturer in electrical and electronic systems engineering Dr Duncan Campbell said the

telescope would be installed by a team of staff from his school on land made available by local astronomy enthusiast Jim Barclay.

Dr Campbell said the team had been developing new technologies to help the telescope function effectively, some of which had potentially commercial spin-offs.

"To ensure 100% power supply to the site, one of our team has developed a unique solar power system so the telescope can go several days without power and disconnect and reconnect itself to the State grid as required," Dr Campbell said.

"There will also be an automated computer system to analyse the weather and control the telescope's positioning and open or close the roof."

Dr Campbell said students from QUT's Faculty of Science would have the opportunity to use the telescope, and students in Built Environment and Engineering would work on the technology systems during their studies.

He said use of the telescope would also be built into the New Basics science curriculum, with Education Queensland providing funding to facilitate access for participating schools.

"This project is really a unique partnership between a number of dedicated and enthusiastic groups, and it will have a whole range of benefits for all Australians," Dr Campbell said.

"The facility will have provision for additional telescopes. There is an opportunity for sponsors to provide extra telescopes to further enhance accessibility to students," he said.

"We are also hoping to get some funding to provide for long-term technical support and maintenance of the facility."

