

Department of Imaging and Applied Physics

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To Whom It May Concern

I have had numerous interactions with Tony Sweetnam over the last several years. These interactions were linked to his role as a Project Manager in CSIRO ATNF. I should state at the outset that those interactions have always been productive, courteous and satisfying. Any outcomes that required actions by Tony were always executed in a timely fashion demonstrating one of his prime attributes, namely, efficiency. It would be remiss of me not to make comment on the versatility that Tony exhibited in his management role. He seemed as comfortable discussing trenching machinery specifications for cable burying in the remote backblocks of WA as he did in discussing CSIRO ATNF's role in developing FPGA-based digital correlators for radio telescopes. He put an impressive effort into project management and clearly subscribed to the view that to make sensible management decisions that relate to technical choices, budgets and timelines, one needs to understand fully the project at hand and the implications these issues have for staff deployment and staff recruitment..

Of the more enjoyable experiences my colleagues and I had with Tony and his CSIRO team were on field trips to the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory (MRO) in the remote MidWest of WA. These experiences were characterised by significant interactions and collaborative work programs related to establishing radio telescope facilities in what was essentially a wilderness region of WA. CSIRO, as was Curtin, was officially a partner in an international project the Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) lead by MIT in the USA. It is difficult to think of how CSIRO, through Tony, could have been more supportive of the MWA project. Tony's attention to pre field campaign logistics (regional maps, local protocol, OH&S aspects of field work, acquisition of instrumentation, etc) were second to none. In the field, it was always pleasing to work with him in developing some of the very basic infrastructure activities (site planning, power, roads, fuel, site buildings..etc) that were required. In a real sense he made difficult tasks easy.

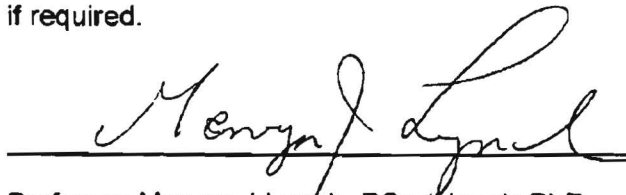
However, Tony's role, as mentioned above, was much grander and broader in that he had responsibility for managing CSIRO's radio astronomy plans for the MRO. Tony and I were members of the MRO Coordinating Committee (MROCC) that included CSIRO, MIT, Univ California at Berkeley, several Australian university representative and the WA Department of Industry and Resources (in which the WA Office of Science Technology and Innovation is located). The MROCC's brief covered essentially all policy issues that related to the establishment of radio astronomy facilities at the MRO. Issues including Native Title, roads, radio interference, instrument location within the MRO, interactions with the Station leaseholder, possible acquisition of the Station lease concerned, implementation of management of the MRO site were the concerns of the MROCC. Tony was always a mine of information on issues raised and always "well ahead of the pack" when it came to resolution of issues. To a large degree Tony always did his homework and anticipated issues that might arise. In my view, he displayed a refreshing and very realistic position on many of the difficult matters that arose and his solutions were always pragmatic and implementable.

A further area where I had contact with Tony was in the engagement of Curtin (ie Pert-based) graduate students in collaborative research work with CSIRO ATNF staff who were located in Sydney. Tony was a real breath of fresh air when it came to making decisions that were seen as mutually beneficial and part of the broad collaborative effort. I can state categorically that his handling of these matters attracted the admiration of my PhD students who regarded him as "a really great guy" who supported their collaborative interactions and research activities with CSIRO staff (ie he arranged for their travel and accommodation at ATNF and ensured that student visits to CSIRO were supported and went well). This attention to detail was impressive and rare.

Tony has always impressed me because of his interpersonal skills. He was at all times direct and stated things as they were. One could always depend upon him and trust him to put the facts on the table at meetings. He, at all times, was prepared to put forward a view on issues and equally prepared to listen to views of others and to work toward a consensus. Further, of all the people I had interaction with on the MRO project (some 40 or so) it was always Tony who did the follow-up 'phone calls to check on how things were progressing, to establish if there was any way in which CSIRO could be of assistance or to discuss the pre-planning of further site visits.

In all, Curtin University found in Tony Sweetnam a real friend as well as a great working colleague. When Tony's involvement in the project at the MRO ceased, we were particularly concerned that a very productive and beneficial collaborative relationship with CSIRO ATNF had ceased. We very much did miss his incredible energy, enthusiasm and congenial personality over the range of activities linked to the radio astronomy program. We still speak of him with great fondness and of the productive times we had during those few years establishing a radio astronomy facility in the WA wilderness. We highly recommend Tony as he pursues new endeavours and wish him well. He will be a great asset to any project both as a personality and as an employee who actually gets things done properly and in a timely fashion.

I am available (Curtin 08 9266 7540; mob 0407 443 951) for further commentary and advice if required.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Mervyn J Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Professor Mervyn J Lynch, BSc (Hons); PhD
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