

Introduction to the Gravity Discovery Centre and Observatory

The [Gravity Discovery Centre and Observatory](#) (GDCO) is a thriving not-for-profit business generating over \$850K per annum in revenue in parallel with strong partnerships with key organisations active in the STEM/heritage outreach space.

We are privileged and honoured to have the support of four very special Patrons and Vice Patrons:

- Patrons: His Excellency The Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM, Governor of Western Australia, and Mrs Darrilyn Dawson
- Vice Patrons: Professor Lyn Beazley AO FAA FTSE and Emeritus Professor David Blair

The vision for the centre is strong and includes:

- *Making it a must-visit destination in WA with international reach*
- *Creating a unique offering for a range of occasions and experiences*
- *Expanding beyond the Gingin site*

Further information on the GDCO and future vision is provided in Appendix 1.

Governance

The function of the Board of the Gravity Discovery Centre Foundation Inc is to collectively ensure the delivery of the organisation's objectives, to set its strategic direction, and to uphold its values. The Board should collectively be responsible and accountable for ensuring and monitoring that the organisation is performing well, is solvent, and is complying with all its legal, financial, and ethical obligations.

The Board is governed by:

- GDC Bylaws
- Other documents –
 - Governance Policy
 - Code of Ethics Policy
 - Board Office Bearer Guidelines
 - Member Recruitment Policy
 - Induction Policy
 - Board Grievance Policy
 - Confidentiality Policy
 - Board Attendance Policy

The purpose of the Foundation is to promote, encourage and provide appropriate opportunities for the education of the general community in aspects of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics with particular emphasis on gravity, astrophysics, cosmology and their relation to art, Aboriginal culture and the environment.

The management committee of the Foundation is titled the "Board". Management committee (Board) members are titled "Directors".

On being elected to the Board, Directors undertake induction and training procedures as provided by the Board.

The role of Directors is to:

- Consider, debate, and vote on issues before the Board on the basis of the best interests of the organisation only
- Comply with the rules, policies, and standing orders of the organisation
- Review and approve the organisation's Strategic Plan, and other consequential arrangements (Business Plan, Marketing Plan, etc)

The tenure of a director will be two years unless they are appointed as a casual vacancy in which case, they will serve the term of the director they are replacing.

Board meetings will be held generally every 2 months with at least one meeting hosted on site at the Gravity Discovery Centre. The other meetings may be hosted in person in Perth with an option to join online or online only.

Roles include the following with role descriptions:

- Board Chair
- Vice Chair
- Board Secretary
- Board Treasurer
- Board members – Directors and potentially group leads if required for task-based activities.

An Executive Committee comprises the following to meet between Board meetings to set the agenda and oversee Board membership.

- Board Chair
- Vice Chair
- Board Secretary
- Board Treasurer
- GDC CEO or delegate (may attend meetings in full or part)

Appendix 1 – Background and Vision

The GDCO is located in the Shire of Gingin, a local government authority situated immediately north of the Perth metropolitan area in the Wheatbelt region. We are often referred to as “Gingin Observatory”, reflecting the strong association we have with Gingin as a destination. In 2021, the Shire's population was 5,751 with an average 1.8 people/km², reflecting very low-density settlement that characterises the region.

The Shire covers an area of 3,200 km² of predominantly rural land with small, growing townships at Gingin, Guilderton, Lancelin, Ledge Point and Seabird. The main industries are agriculture, grazing, horticulture and some viticulture, supplied with over 235 gigalitres of water from the Gingin Groundwater Area each year. Tourism is also an important industry along the coast and benefits from relative proximity to Perth Airport. Alongside the Gingin Gravity Precinct and the GDCO, major features of the Shire include Moore River National Park, Lancelin Sand Dunes, Guilderton Sunken Pinnacles and various beaches and wineries.

The Wheatbelt region contains most of WA's grain growing land and its economy is predominantly driven by agriculture and cropping. However, the region is becoming more economically diverse with growth in mining, transport, manufacturing, construction, fishing and tourism. The region houses important space industry research facilities including the European Space Agency's Deep Space Ground Station in New Norcia and the Mingenew Space Precinct which is home to around 70 companies that provide space-related services.

The GDCO is an important economic driver that helps to build and diversify the local and regional economy through contribution to three key sectors:

- Tourism Industry
- Space Industry
- STEM Education



Our Future: Towards 2028

The Gravity Discovery Centre and Observatory has reached a pivotal junction in its history. We have the opportunity to modernise its facilities, grow its capacity and strengthen our capability to secure our position as the go-to science attraction in Australia.

A magnificent transformation is planned to redesign our internal and external spaces, create new exhibits and future-proof the base buildings with modern upgrades. It will feature inspirational interactives, a planetarium ceiling projection, gravitational wave displays, a double helix stairway slide, a spiral ramp and orrery mechanical model of the solar system. It will showcase the latest technology through multi-sensory displays, augmented reality and virtual projections.

The upgrade will redefine GDCO for current and future generations and reposition it as the most advanced and exciting space science visitor experience in Australia. We aim to officially relaunch under a new name, The Western Australian Space Observatory Centre, as part of the 2029 Perth Bicentenary. The Centre will also have a Noongar name by which it will be commonly known.

The Bicentenary will mark 200 years of European colonisation of Perth and coincide with the 30-year anniversary of the GDCO. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate our achievements and solidify our future.

Our Future: Beyond 2028

Looking beyond 2028 and the current Strategic Plan, we hope to develop our observatory into a fully comprehensive Multi-Messenger Observatory. Multi-messenger astrophysics is a relatively new field that uses information carried by cosmic messengers like gravitational waves, photons and cosmic rays, to answer questions about some of the most extreme events in the universe.

The MMO would be the first public observatory of its kind anywhere in the world, providing a tremendous drawcard for visitors to Australia to experience our magnificent dark skies and observe the universe through state-of-the-art telescopes with astronomers and local Aboriginal Elders.

This five-year Strategic Plan has been developed to provide a solid basis for future growth and investment in the GDCO between 2023-2028 in the lead up to and beyond the 2029 Bicentenary. The Bicentenary will mark 200 years of European colonisation of Perth and coincide with the 30-year anniversary of the GDCO. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate our achievements and solidify our future.

GDCO operations are managed by CEO Jan Devlin with support from the GDCO management team.

GDCO Management Team

Jan Devlin
Chief Executive Officer

Extensive experience in facility management across a variety of businesses in Australia, including in Cape York Aboriginal communities. Passionate about facilitating systems and processes that allow GDCO people to fulfil their potential and that help the business to flourish. Joined the GDCO in 2014.

Neil Gerrard
Chief Financial Officer

Chartered Accountant, business advisor and founder of Errant Venture. After military service in Iraq and East Timor, Neil has a special interest in helping not-for-profit and community-led businesses. Joined the GDCO in 2015.

Rick Tonello
Head Astronomer

Over 20 years' experience in astronomy education and outreach including 6 years at Perth Observatory, 10 years lecturing at Edith Cowan University and establishment of Astronomy Education Services, an incursion-based education service that visits regional communities. Joined the GDCO in 2015.

Mostyn Nannup
General Manager

A Noongar man who was engaged in a business assistant role and quickly grew into a strong manager of operations with support from the CEO. Joined the GDCO in 2020.

GDCO staff and volunteers are valued as one of our greatest assets and are afforded multiple training and professional development opportunities.

We are a diverse, flexible and fun team that embraces open communication with our visitors. This is reflected in customer feedback and regular recognition through award schemes.

- Joondalup Business Awards: Best Hospitality and Tourism Business 2023
- WA Tourism Awards: Bronze Award, Best Tourism Attraction, 2022
- WA Tourism Awards: Finalist, Best Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism Business, 2022
- Wheatbelt Business Excellence Awards: Best Not for Profit Organisation, 2022
- Joondalup Business Awards: Best Hospitality and Tourism Business, 2022.
- Joondalup Business Awards: Best Tourist Attraction and Business of the Year, 2021
- WA Tourism Awards: Finalist, Best Tourism Attraction, Best Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism, 2021

