



La Serena, August 14, 2009

Dear AURA Staff members

As you may be aware, we are about to begin a significant expansion of the AURA Hotel on Cerro Pachón, the second phase of an ongoing effort to improve the accommodations there. We are writing to describe the planned logistical changes that this construction work will imply. This plan represents the consensus reached through extensive discussion involving representatives of all the Programs (Gemini, SOAR, CTIO).

The construction and remodeling work will begin on August 17, 2009 and is expected to be completed by January 2010. During this period, the staff and visiting astronomers who would normally sleep during the day on Cerro Pachón will sleep on Cerro Tololo. Lodging, meals, and transportation details are provided below. We have tried to anticipate the issues that may arise during this disruptive period, and hope that all of the staff will work together to find the best solutions to any problems that may arise.

### **CONSTRUCTION DETAILS**

The construction includes the addition of five new rooms with similar standards to the six already in use. It will be carried out by Constructora BRAC & Cia Ltda. At the same time some minor remodeling and improvements will be made to the existing rooms, based on user input and experience during the first year of operation. Further user input is being requested on aspects of the hotel's terminations and is being taken fully into consideration. The management of AURA and its Observatories place considerable importance on such user input, and will consider it carefully, either implementing suggested changes where they are possible and a clear consensus exists, or explaining why they could not be implemented. We are already evaluating the possibility of replacing the heating system, as well as implementing some requested modifications to the bathrooms.

In the long term this expansion will have significant benefits for staff and visitors on Cerro Pachón, ensuring that the Hotel normally has sufficient capacity to accommodate all users. In future overflow into the 20 Units dorm should be necessary only under very exceptional circumstances, if at all. However, inevitably the construction activity will cause some inconvenience in the near term.



## **SAFETY**

Safety during construction is being given high priority in this project. Apart from the crucially important issues of safety associated with the building site and overall construction logistics to and from the site, for the entire duration of the construction and modification work the AURA Hotel will be uninhabitable because of the inherent noise and safety issues and because of the proposed modifications to the existing rooms. In addition after evaluating the practical measures that might economically be taken to mitigate the impact of noise at the 20 units dorm, it was concluded that even this would not be suitable for occupation by day sleepers.

## **LODGING**

Due to both safety and noise issues, all the night time staff and visiting astronomers of Gemini and SOAR will be accommodated on Cerro Tololo, starting on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> of August, until the construction work is completed. Reviews of lodging demand indicate that although we will be at nearly full capacity, we have the rooms to handle the planned occupancy. Staff will be lodged either in the main "Astronomers" dorm, or in one of the houses as demand dictates. During this period room reservations should be made through your program's accommodation coordinator as normal. However, since at times the Tololo dorms will be running close to capacity, it would help if staff could make their reservations as far in advance as reasonably possible so that we can anticipate periods of excess demand, and take steps to deal with them. We have asked the program accommodation coordinators to work especially closely together and with the AOSS Mountain Operations Supervisor during this period to try to avoid hiccups, and resolve whatever problems that may arise quickly and effectively..

To maintain the payback of the loan for Phase 1 construction, accommodation rates during this period will be determined by where the lodgers would normally have been sleeping if there were not construction activity underway. Thus Pachon lodging rates will apply for Pachon staff and visitors who are being lodged on Cerro Tololo.

During the construction period both Gemini and SOAR will have shutdowns, or will be carrying out other engineering activities that involve staff or visitors working during the day, but sleeping at night on the mountain. For reasons of efficiency, and so as not to overload the Tololo dormitories, the Programs may consider use of the 20 Units dorm for night sleepers during such limited periods. This use will be discussed and approved in observatory coordination meetings, and further details will be provided if/when this option is exercised. Also, the 20 units remains as an lodging option for emergency situations on Pachon. Pachon lodging rates will continue to apply in these cases.



## MEALS

In order to accommodate the Pachon night staff who will eat on Tololo before driving over to Pachon, we will adjust the dinner schedule slightly. From August 17<sup>th</sup> until late September, the Tololo restaurant will open at 4:30pm and stay open until 6:30pm (simply shifting the current schedule ahead 30 minutes). The current lunch schedule will not change. We will probably revise these times in October when the Chilean time changes.

## TRANSPORTATION

During this period, night staff and visitors working on Pachon will normally travel between Tololo & Pachon in fleet vehicles. Carryall transport will normally be used for their journeys between Tololo and La Serena. The Carryall timetables for the current winter are given below. The times may be modified as we move into Spring, particularly with the time change in October.

### PACHON CARRYALL

Departs La Serena	<b>Up</b>	09:00AM
Arrives Pachon		10:45AM
Departs Pachon	<b>Down</b>	11.20AM
Departs Tololo		11.50AM
Arrives La Serena		13.20PM
Departs La Serena	<b>Up</b>	14.20PM
Arrives Tololo		15.50PM
Arrives Pachon		17:20PM
Departs Pachon	<b>Down</b>	18:30PM
Arrives La Serena		20:15PM

### CARRYALL TIMETABLES (Winter)

Weekend Carryall : on demand (Nominally a 12:00 La Serena departure and 14:00 Tololo departure)

### TOLOLO CARRYALL

12:00	Leaves La Serena	13:30	Arrives Tololo
14:30	Departs Tololo	16:00	Arrives La Serena

#### Saturdays

8:30	Leaves La Serena	10:00	Arrives Tololo
16:30	Departs Tololo	18:00	Arrives La Serena

Staff should note that there will be two options available for downward trips from Cerro Tololo during the construction period during Monday to Fridays, with one shuttle leaving for La Serena at 11:20am and another leaving at 2:30pm.

At least initially, there will also be two options available for the upward trip to Tololo from La Serena. One will leave La Serena at 12.00 noon and the other will leave at 2.20pm, Monday to Friday.



Subject to availability, staff and visitors may use either of these shuttle services – on the down trip or the up trip - at no additional cost to their usual service. Similarly, special transport at weekends will be arranged to make the best use of the available resources and sharing of services is being encouraged. Staff and visitors should make arrangements via their Program's usual point of contact for reservations.

As always, staff driving on the AURA mountain roads are urged to drive defensively and keep within the posted speed limits. Each Program has revised plans for vehicle maintenance, back-up vehicles, refueling etc. which are being circulated to their users with a reminder on mountain radio use and rules on night time movement of vehicles.

The construction work is taking place as a consequence of a further investment by AURA in mountain infrastructure, which will be paid back by Program use of the extended facility. The inconvenience caused by the construction itself is, of course, regretted. Plans were made to try to avoid the lodging change to Tololo and to mitigate the disturbance on Pachon, but, ultimately, it was decided that the temporary move for lodgers to Tololo was the most prudent course of action in the circumstances. We are planning to make sure that the Pachon hotel's Phase 2's construction will be seen as another very positive investment in our infrastructure in support of our users and the telescopes' operations.

The success of these temporary changes to our local logistics will, of course, rely not just on good overall planning, but on the solidarity, teamwork, courtesy and mutual respect of all those affected: lodgers and janitors, restaurant staff and customers, carryall drivers and passengers, construction workers, supervision and administration. We thank you all in advance for your valuable cooperation and best wishes.

Chris Smith  
AURA Head of Mission  
& the Local Coordination Group (Hernan Bustos, Enrique Figueroa, Steve Heathcote,  
Peter McEvoy, Leonor Opazo)