

Short Biography of Professor Richard T. Schilizzi



Professor Richard T. Schilizzi became the first Director of the International Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Project on January 1, 2003. At the end of 2011, he steps down from this role to a well-earned retirement after more than 40 years of contributing to the field of radio astronomy.

Educated in Australia, Richard obtained his Ph.D. in Radio Astronomy from the University of Sydney in 1973. After a post-doctoral fellowship at the California Institute of Technology working on VLBI, he joined the Netherlands Foundation for Research in Astronomy in 1976 with responsibility for developing VLBI in The Netherlands.

From 1991 to 2001, Richard was J. H. Oort Foundation Adjunct Professor at Leiden University, The Netherlands, and in 2002 he was appointed Professor in Radio Astronomy at Leiden.

A significant milestone in Richard's career occurred in 1993 when he was appointed foundation Director of the Joint Institute for Very Long Baseline Interferometry in Europe (JIVE). Richard led the building of the European VLBI Network and the establishment of JIVE as the central data processing and support institute for the European VLBI Network. This background in collaborative international projects was critical to success in his role as Director of the International Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Project.

The SKA project is a visionary radio astronomy collaboration between institutions from nineteen countries, an ambitious effort to build the world's next-generation radio telescope. The instrument will have one million square meters of collecting area, making it 50 times more sensitive than today's leading telescopes. This sensitivity will let astronomers achieve a long-sought goal: to peer into the most distant reaches of the universe and probe what existed before the stars were born.

Richard has nurtured the SKA project from its early days with alacrity and determination, and leaves the project on a firm footing for moving forward into the new pre-construction era.