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## TELESCOPE ZOOMS IN ON MILESTONE



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### FRASER WILLIAMS

A telescope in the remote Mid West outback could be on the edge of a breakthrough thanks to a "major upgrade" expected within the next year.

The Murchison Widefield Array project comprises 8192 antennae spread across more than 30km at the Murchison Radio-Astronomy Observatory. The project is this

week marking its 10th anniversary of operation, surveying hundreds of thousands of galaxies, detecting the biggest known eruption since the Big Bang and discovering new types of exotic celestial objects.

MWA director Professor Steven Tingay said the project was reaching a vital point in its timeline.

"In the next 12 months, a major upgrade to the MWA's facilities in WA

will enable it to generate four times more data than it ever has while doubling its sensitivity to probe even deeper into the secrets of our universe," he said.

"The project is also reaching its critical final phase as we approach the 2029 completion of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory, a global collaboration that will build and operate the world's largest and most sensitive telescope tasked with answering some of astronomy's biggest questions."

The SKA observatory is being built at the MWA's Murchison location.

Curtin University vice-chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne said the MWA had significant economic benefits, with Ernst and Young modelling determining that the \$34.8 million Australia had invested in the project had driven an \$81.1 million boost to Gross Domestic Product.