

Aurora to Darwin to Stir the Dutch..... and the Canadians.... the Germans..... the Americans..... the Brits..... and the Puerto Ricans

Melbourne based Aurora 101 solar car team arrives in Darwin this weekend to begin preparations for the 7th World Solar Challenge. Inaugurated in 1987, the 3,010 km race along the Stuart Highway from Darwin to Adelaide this year will attract 27 competitors, enthusiasts, and the media from 10 countries.

Spurred on by their narrow 34 minute defeat by Holland's Delft University Alpha Centauri team in 2001, Aurora undertook a technology upgrade of the Aurora 101 vehicle. Their extensively improved Aurora 101 solar car has been fitted with new space grade triple junction gallium arsenide solar cells, newly developed motor controller from Tritium, new lithium polymer batteries, and high efficiency solar trackers from AERL.

Aurora's extensive improvements equip them with what is regarded as the most efficient solar car. Their 11 member team is probably the most experienced in this year's WSC - between them notching up 34 international solar car races, including 13 World Solar Challenges.

In spite of Aurora 101's enhancements and its reputation for car efficiency, Aurora will have to compete against superior solar power from Germany (Bochum's "Hans Go"), Canada (Queens Uni's "Gemini") and Holland's defending Challenge champion (Nuon's "Nuna II") cars - all of whom will be out to win the World Solar Challenge and push the average speed for the 3,000 km race to over 95 kph.

Aurora currently owns the world's fastest solar car race speed record, achieved in the 2002 Adelaide to Sydney Sunrace - 94.5 kph over the 2,000 km race.

The 2001 World Solar Challenge event was the fastest ever contested. Both the winning super car, Alpha Centauri from Holland's Delft University, and the defending 1999 World Champion Aurora-RMIT 101 battled no more than 15 minutes apart for most of the race - both smashing the existing event record established by the Honda Dream in 1996-89.8 kph, creating new World Solar Challenge speeds: Alpha Centauri-91.81 kph and Aurora-90.21 kph.

Aurora lead driver, **Tony Vriens** with over 17,000 kms solar car driving experience, will share the WSC event with fellow WSC and Sunrace experienced drivers, **Mark Gilligan**, recently returned from the USA and **Stella Ngondi**, a First Class Honours RMIT Electrical Engineer graduate now living in Melbourne from Kenya.

The 10 day 2003 World Solar Challenge starts in Darwin on 19 October.

Aurora's team members comprise David Fewchuk, Peter Pudney, Dennis Thoroughgood, Caroline Murphy, Tony Vriens, Stella Ngondi, Mark Gilligan, Tom Baker, Eli Thurrowgood, Darren Trafford and Paul Jolly. This will be the first World Solar Challenge for 8 of the 11 member team.

A second Aurora vehicle - spawned by Hamilton based Aurora 101 members Jack and son, Damien McArthur, and fellow Hamilton & Alexander College Year 10 student, Doug Williams - will also compete in the WSC in their ACE Radio 3HA Southern Aurora solar car. The Southern Aurora-Hamilton Group formed this year and is mentored by the Aurora 101 team and RMIT Hamilton. The group has taken Aurora-RMIT 101's 1999 winning car and upgraded solar cells, the battery system and chassis design.