



2003 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 19 - 28 October 2003

Report 2
Monday 13 October 2003

Preparations for Competing in the 2003 World Solar Challenge

Most of the 2003 Aurora 101 solar car team have arrived in Darwin for preparations in the week before the seventh World Solar Challenge. Tony Vriens arrives late tonight and will complete the 11 person Aurora team. The TOLL depot in Berrimah is our headquarters. The staff here have made us most welcome right from the boss Scott Chapman to Wendy and Ernie.

Today's activities have been aimed at checking that the car is operational so that we can have our first on road test session tomorrow. The Road Transport authorities arrived at 1.00 PM to check the roadworthiness of the Aurora 101 solar car and to issue the temporary road permit. Stella Ngondi drove the road test to confirm the brakes worked well.



This year the roads available to pre-test solar cars are restricted to a section of the Arnhem Highway towards the town of Jabiru. Road works and rail construction have put many construction trucks on the other roads we had used. So tomorrow we drive 120 km out of Darwin before we can unload the solar car and continue on to Jabiru.

We hope to drop in at the the Jabiru area Primary School to show the solar car to the students.

The solar car electronics have been re-set to match the characteristics of the 30kg battery pack and the slightly higher voltage it is producing compared to the 18kg pack used in Japan. Yesterday the electrical engineering boffins from RMIT spent all day draining the batteries and rebalancing the modules. Two new modules were installed as they were a bit weaker than the rest. Tom, Eli, Stella and Peter worked until after midnight doing this. Finally the cooling fans for the new battery pack were glued in place.



Each power-point tracker was re-adjusted and settings for temperature revised in the Tritium controller.

Tyres have been checked, wheels balanced, two-way radios installed and a new front suspension cover finished off. It looks like we will be ready to go tomorrow. Our convoy of Ford vehicles will look terrific along the 3010 km race to Adelaide.



Our second team Southern Aurora from Hamilton are expected to arrive in Darwin tomorrow after their dash on the road from Hamilton. Both teams will miss Jack McArthur who worked desperately long hours to finish the new trailer for Hamilton and is in the middle of changing properties. The Hamilton team are bringing Aurora's last motor and two new rear wheels, so we need them to arrive safely.

We have been in contact with a number of the competing teams today. The 2-seat Queens University car is stationed at the Hidden Valley race-track. They are in good shape having done well in the American Solar Challenge in July. Also at the track are The Puerto Rican team, MIT from the USA, and Detleff Schmidt, the renowned suitcase man from Munich, Germany. We are all hoping that Detleff, in his seventh attempt, will finish the race in Adelaide.

Race favourites Nuna, led by Holland's only ever astronaut Wubbo Ockels, also visited us to discuss tyres. We look forward to seeing their powerful new car later in the week.

Master solar panel builder Hans Goehermann is also in town with his wife and must be looking forward to seeing one of his solar arrays on the winning car.

We hope that the car runs well tomorrow, confirming our best preparation yet for this great international event. We are backed by a great group of sponsors who give us excellent support and we are striving to do our best.

Did we mention food? Prepared by 2 inexperienced males, Darren and Paul. Lots of shopping and BBQs. Everyone is still standing.

