



2003 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 19 - 28 October 2003

Report 3
Tuesday 14 October 2003

Preparations for Competing in the 2003 World Solar Challenge

Today was our first big test on the road to Jabiru. We set 9.00am as departure time and nearly made it. The full Aurora convoy rolled out of the TOLL depot in Berrimah and headed towards the Arnhem Highway. We travelled 120km to Bark Hut Inn before being allowed to run the solar car. The tourist buses from Darwin had many many spectators who showed lots of interest in the Aurora solar car. At this stop we also met the 4 person media crew that will be reporting the race progress back to Holland. Some were in Darwin in 2001, so we were amongst friends.



Tony Vriens took the first driving stint of about 150 km to the mining town of Jabiru. We avoided the \$16.95 per person charge to enter the Kakadu National Park, as solar car testing in Kakadu is free.



Most of the trip was done at 100km/h. The solar car ran faultlessly. We received confirmation of the solar power output which was up to expectations. In particular, we were watching motor performance and temperatures carefully. The telemetry unit in the lead car can pick up 30 streams of data so watching is easy enough.

Along the way we crossed several rivers where 'jumping crocodile boat trips' seemed to be the popular thing for tourists to do. We also passed wetlands and termite mounds, lovely groups of birds and recently regrown bush. But we were on a mission, and Jabiru was the destination.



On Monday we had called the Jabiru Area School to see if they would be interested in a solar car visit. Were they ever! We rolled into the 270 pupil school grounds to the welcome of most of them. In fact a complete assembly had been organised and members of the team fielded many questions from even the 4 year old pre-schoolers. This was a great mid-journey break. This school has a special heritage unit made up of children of traditional land owners and those that speak the two area languages, Kungwinku and Gunjemhi. Also at the school, on a special extended visit, was Shelly Morris, a well known indigenous singer/songwriter. She is currently recording a CD, to be named 'Sounds of Kakadu'.



Caroline's lunch packs went down very well. We changed motors and then it was Stella Ngondi's turn for the return trip. Again the car performed well and when we returned to Bark Hut Inn we were the point of interest for a French tour group. One tourist, an expressive French woman, was so excited to see a woman driving the solar car that she thumped the solar array with great enthusiasm. Little do they know how much faith we have in the strength of the Goehermann solar panels.

By time we returned to Darwin our sister team from Hamilton 'Southern Aurora' had completed their long drive from Victoria and were looking quite exhausted. They delivered our last motor and new rear wheels. More work for tomorrow.

As we are packing up for the day at 9.00pm and looking forward to dinner we have been visited by members of the Nuna 2001 World Solar Challenge team. In typical sharing fashion we have shown them all of our new tricks.....maybe, maybe not.