



15 - 19 March 2004

Report 3 - 16th March

Schools Day

Denice Barker and Christine Ward of Aurora Energy had organised for the Aurora 101 Solar Car to visit three schools. And very different schools they were!

At 9am we rolled past the city to visit Elizabeth College, a sort-of high school finisher featuring only Grades 11 & 12. The first group of students to come to see the car were dressed in white lab coats, and looked as if they were coming to examine a patient! After explaining the solar energy side of the technology we had one volunteer willing to step into the car as the Student Representative. A very noticeable part of this school was the number of students from Africa. The students kept coming, especially as we were in their recess period, and we found one Greek student to demonstrate the technology in anticipation of racing in Greece in May. By 10:45am, we had the solar car back on the road, heading to our next appointment. By this time, police headquarters in Hobart were notified of our plans, and we felt that our movements would be well tracked by central radio control. Thank you Sgt. Hinchin!



In this part of Hobart there are quite steep hills, and this gave us a chance to try the solar car on some steeper gradients. It handled them pretty well, although we haven't quite tried the 18% gradient that we will find in the Greek event.

Jim Laver, at the Friends School welcomed us at the Senior campus where space was clearly at a premium. Again, these were Grade 11 & 12 students. The main uniform seemed to be shirt and tie, but of course the shirt hanging outside the pants, and the tie loose around the unbuttoned shirt top! Still, it was a uniform, and these students were extremely interested in the solar car technology. In fact, as we went into their lunch period, the student common room was lined with people working on their computers in comfortable quarters, which included food preparation areas and great seating. Student ratios are strictly 50/50 (male/female): a well-disciplined Quaker-organised private school.



Leaving the school was difficult because of the narrow roads, and the fact that our solar car driver lost his radio contact. After fitting new batteries to the radio we went for lunch down Risdon Rd, opting for hot takeaway rather than fresh K-Mart! Aurora Energy had us scheduled next at Newtown High School, a boys-only school, where we arrived to an empty car park, with only Esther Begbie to welcome us! Esther is Team Manager David Fewchuk's sister, who was desperate to see the solar car travelling through Hobart traffic. We used the car park for some hot laps, and soon the scheduled student visit started.





John Sheppard, one of the teachers has developed the teaching module for model solar cars, and students have built some seven of these. Also, the school has built its own model solar car racetrack. So there were few dumb questions, and lots of requests to see the car in action. Rob Shandley took a turn at driving, and when the car was stopped amongst students, the press was on. This means that nobody stood back from the car, they all just jammed up as close to the edge as they could. We got past the “how fast will it go” type of questions, and “can I drive” questions, and “how do you get in” questions to get to the real heart of it -- “can we see a burnout”! The poor solar car! Actually, we did get one of the teachers to drive it, Stuart Hadrill, head of metals design technology. It was hard to tell who was the more nervous person, Stuart or David Fewchuk! We did have a flat tyre! Might have been the burnout!



Three very different school visit experiences, but really worthwhile.

The last commitment for the day had been organised by Rod Howell, a representative of the Tasmania Automobile Chamber of Commerce. The car went on display at Bob Jane T-Mart in Moonah, thanks to its proprietor Jason Vessinger, and we rounded up the day with a BBQ at that site. Of course, we did need the flat tyre fixed, and where else but Bob Jane T-Mart! We also have to recommend Howell Automotive, 199 Main Rd, Moonah.



The Tasmania Experience is half-finished, and tomorrow we will be at Brooks High School in Launceston at 9am.
