

Aurora in the Global Green Challenge 2009
Report Five
22 October 2009

Team Manager Peter Pudney seems to like early mornings. He had Aurora 101 loaded and knocking at the door of the scrutineering pavilion before 8.00 AM, even before the scrutineers had assembled.

New tire, voltage cover, 27 degree seat back angle seat pad and that was about it. Passed the scrutineering phase!

Back at the track the plan was to prepare the two cars for a few fast laps to get some idea of what they would be capable of on Saturday when starting positions would be determined by the lap times achieved for each entrant. Of course everyone knows that this has absolutely no bearing on the 3010 km run to Adelaide but it's something the solar car teams enjoy.

The Hidden Valley race track hosts a round of the V8 Supercar series which is Australia's most popular form of car racing. These 600 horsepower, wide tired race cars literally thunder around the track. The lap record for this category is around 1 min 10 secs.

In 2007 the fastest solar car lap ever recorded was by Kei Nomura of the Japanese team TIGA who shocked us all with a lap at 1 min 53 secs. Not bad for just 2 horsepower and skinny 16 inch tires!

Southern Aurora was first out; it recorded 2 min 13 secs. This was the fastest an Aurora solar car of that family had ever done. We were happy.

Then driver Derrick Rodgers strapped himself into the Aurora 101 car to see what it would do. Down the main straight for the first time looked pretty fast, as did the climb to the highest point of the track. We could see the follow car struggling to keep up. The downhill section with several kinks was blinding then finally down the straight again. The time was 1min 53 seconds, equal to the fastest ever. Maximum speed was 147 km/hr. And all within the maximum temperature for the motor designed to efficiently cruise down the highway using less than 2 kilowatts of power at 97% efficiency. We were happy enough.

In fact so happy with how preparations are going that most of the team was given the afternoon off to see something of Darwin and to attend the famous Mindl Beach night market in the evening.

Friday will be a serious day of final preparation with battery cycling, array cleaning, communication equipment installation and so on.

Our group of 11 new first time team members have integrated well, the cars have been well prepared and are in one piece, and we are looking forward to the commencement of the road trip to Adelaide on Sunday morning. All fingers are crossed.

