

Aurora in the Global Green Challenge 2009
Report Six
23 October 2009

More preparation was the promise of the day.

First of all the cleaning of the solar array. Both Aurora solar cars have panels encapsulated by Hans Gochermann in Germany. They have a special nanoscopic grain on the surface to ensure that light that would otherwise be reflected off the panel is entrapped and directed to the encapsulated solar cell. They cannot be rubbed clean for the risk of damaging this delicate surface. About all that works is cleaning with special electrical tape. But it consumes about 10 man hours. So that was how 20 hours were spent throughout the day.

Then the batteries were to undergo another cycling and balancing. This requires that the battery packs with their individual cells be brought to a nearly empty state. At this point any differences between cell blocks can be found and evened out. Then the battery can be recharged to full. Again all of this is a 10 hour job.

This consumption of time was much more serious as there were not enough daylight hours to do both solar cars and both cars needed to have well charged batteries for official qualifying laps on Saturday. This required an all night vigil and a small group volunteered to do this.

More teams were turning up at the Hidden Valley race track to get the feel of the track. Many teams were working hard to complete or modify their cars. Some were repairing damage caused in transit after their shipments travelled half way around the world. In particular the new Swisspirit team were wondering how to repair their damaged front suspension.

Visitors that were here to observe the event also turned up. Kei Nomura, one time leader of the fast TIGA team came to Darwin. Jack Catalan, leader of the Philippine team Sinag also arrived. That group are building their second car and plan to compete in the next Global Green Challenge in 2011. And finally Aurora team member Darren Trafford arrived with his family following a week long trek northwards on the Stuart Highway. Darren reported that there was a lot of road kill on the highway but no sections under repair. [In past events the Nuna team would send out a team before the solar car arrived specifically to remove the road kill]

Our friends from the UNSW Sunswift team were finally scheduled for scrutineering, nearly the last team to do so. You guessed it, wrong seat back angle. So as scrutineering was about to close UNSW Sunswift was undergoing further modifications. Aurora also had the follow car checked for all signage and safety equipment so scrutineering was also completed for the Southern Aurora team.

The nice thing about the day was that it finished with a Northern Territory Government reception in Parliament House. At 6.30 PM teams in their race uniforms as well as volunteers and officials arrived in their hundreds. What a great way to meet old acquaintances. The full range of 16 countries was represented. This was more fun than the speeches but altogether it was a good night. But the battery charging pushed on.

Qualifying tomorrow and then the big pack up to get on the road Sunday morning.

