

REPORT FOR MONDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2009

Both Aurora teams now faced serious odds about gaining a good finishing place.

Yesterday through several different problems each team had lost 6 to 7 hours broken by the side of the road and in a Katherine workshop undertaking repairs. Both were back running and today there was real work to do.

The big leaders Tokai, University of Michigan, OSU and Nuna were far ahead and uncatchable.

The first job was to take the solar cars back to the place on the road where they had broken down. Then at 8.00 AM under the supervision of an event observer it was 'go chase' the rest of the field. The first 100 km. was just to reach Katherine. The stop was no longer manned yet two Canadian cars were still making repairs at that stop and had been there overnight.

Derrick was strapped in to drive the car to the next media stop at Dunmarra. Aurora 101 was in 30th place and Southern Aurora in 31st position. We had a lot of ground to make up and there were 10 more media stops to reach. This is when we appreciate just how big Australia is.

It was hot. Probably around 38 degrees centigrade. Neither of the drivers complained and seemed to have enough airflow around them to survive 3-4 hours in the car. In country like this the waterways that may see rain just once in the year take on much importance, We passed Daly River, Hayes Creek, Emerald Springs, Mataranka Hot Springs and Edith Falls to name just a few. We also passed 12 other solar car entrants as we cruised at a steady speed of 94-97 km/hr

We did have a front tire puncture on both cars in each case damaging the wheel rims on the coarse gravel topped roads. Aurora 101 also lost the services of one of the four power point trackers, cutting the array power by 30%. But no fix until night fall.

But the country side had many interesting names such as, Cutta Cutta Corner, Gurrie Airstrip, Nutwood Downs, Beetaloo, Muckaty Station and Bootoo. Go on, say them all quickly.

By the required stopping time of 5.00 PM Aurora 101 was just 40 km from the next media stop at Tennant Creek. Southern Aurora was 45 minutes further back. We look to have passed another 6 entries to have reached 12th place overall and third place in the Challenge Silicon Class. So there is a glimmer of hope in this category with both MIT from the USA and UNSW from Sydney ahead of us.

Out in the overall lead we learnt that Tokai had gone through Alice Springs and was building its lead on Michigan and Nuna .

Tomorrow we must pass through Alice Springs ourselves and be well past it. Team manger Peter Pudney has a speaking engagement in Adelaide on Thursday night. That's a bit of incentive.

