

## **2014 Vice President's Wiruna Report**

By Joe Cauchi.

I feel that over the past 12 months there has been significant progress made in improving Wiruna for the Club's members and visitors.

A large farm gate has been installed at the end of Bon Glen Road on the southern boundary for use as an emergency exit route in case of fire. This gate is not to be used as an entry point.

A new large water storage tank has been installed in place of the old galvanised tank, along with a new septic tank. The plumbing to the showers has been updated and a high tech water pump has been installed. After fixing up a few water leaks along the lines, the whole system works very well and gives a comfortable hot shower.

The Society's two large 'scopes have been fitted with Stella Cat tracking platforms and new Dec. bearings fitted on the 17 ½ inch. These improvements will help Sky Tours during Star Parties and observing sessions. The rubber skirting around the 25" observatory has been replaced and the skirting around the 17 ½ inch will be done next.

Ongoing maintenance at Wiruna is carried out throughout the year, for example, replacing cisterns in the men's toilet block, installing new signs on the property, mowing the grass, making the breezeway bird proof and constant woodcutting.

Our current project is replacing the bank of deep cycle batteries in the breezeway. This was carried out on the July new moon weekend. The 12 deep cycle 450 amp hours batteries and a battery box were installed in the same position as the previous batteries and when the wiring is finished during August, this system will put out a more efficient 24 volt solar system power supply. Two new solar panels which were installed several months ago will complement this new system.

After letters were sent to all the permanent caravan and tent owners late last year, several tents which were not being used were taken down, and 2 caravans changed hands. This is in compliance with the rules of any member leaving these items on the property.

The 2014 Star Party was an outstanding success. The attendance was higher than last year and the weather was fantastic. Actually, this was the best run of clear weather in the first 6 months of this year. As usual, the guest speakers were well received. Telescope making and astroimaging competitions, various workshops, swap tables, vendors' displays and a large range of door prizes make the SPSP the premium event of the ASNSW's year. The Kandos Scouts provided the valuable service of catering, as in previous years, and the Saturday night roast dinner cooked by Society members was delicious and well attended.

The weather throughout the year varied from extremely hot conditions during January and February where shorts and T-shirts were comfortable at night to very cold in May and June with snow and many layers of clothing.

In June we had a winter solstice dinner which was served in the meeting hall with almost all those at Wiruna participating. Later we watched a movie in the hall as the weather was unkind for astronomy. We have had several movie sessions in the past few months when the skies clouded up.

Attendance was markedly higher than last year with 38.2 people per month. Income was also higher from camping, bunk house and house fees, totalling \$5042.00. As I don't personally collect fees for on-site tents and vans, income from these are not included.

The number of clear Friday and Saturday nights of new moon weekends increased to 16.5 night last year. From last July to February this year we have had a phenomenal number of clear consecutive Friday and Saturday nights. The rest of the year has been hopeless as far as clear nights go. Although we have had a higher rainfall during the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months, we are in drought conditions at present.

There are still a few jobs to be done on the "to do" list, the next major undertaking at Wiruna is the outdoor kitchen. At present I am getting 3 quotes from professional shed makers and installers. We have given up on the idea of extending the existing building, and are going with a new building and fittings.

I have contacted the Rural Fire Service in the hope of getting a controlled back burn done on our property this year and I have been told we would be allotted two consecutive Saturdays for this purpose. As things stand at present, I am still waiting to be contacted. We only have until the end of October for this burn, and the RFS is waiting for the right conditions to do this safely and completely.

A big thanks to all those who helped with projects throughout the past 12 months at Wiruna, and also to all the organisers and volunteers who helped prepare and run the SPSP.