

Annual Report 2018 – Vice President Crago

It is my pleasure to present the Vice Present Crago report for 2018.

The good news is that it's been a busy year at Crago. The number of clear nights has dramatically improved, visitor numbers are up and the observatory received a well needed cleanout.

Now to the bad. The Society still does not have a new lease with Crown Lands for the Crago site. At the AGM last year, I reported that the Society and the State Government had agreed on the terms of a new lease and we were poised to sign. Then in November, I received a call from Crown Lands to tell me the Crown could not sign the lease due to various internal procedural issues. A review needed to be undertaken, which would conclude in February.

Surprisingly, the review was actually completed by February when we received a letter from the Crown Lands informing us that they could not enter into a Lease with ASNSW because a new Aboriginal Land claim had been lodged over the site. This is the second land claim lodged during the negotiation process. The first one being denied by the Minister for Lands and then in the Land and Environment Court. However, the second one is on firmer footing and is currently still under review by the Government. The Society has now lodged over close to 100 pages of documentation with the Government to try and bring the lease to a conclusion.

A sub-committee was appointed this year to deal with all matters relating to the Crago lease. This sub-committee will continue to deal with the government, through the department and through other branches of the government to try and bring this protracted episode to a conclusion.

Recently I advertised in the Bowen Mountain Newsletter for any locals who might be interested in helping at the observatory. Having local support is crucial to our ongoing operation and success on the Mountain. Subsequently, the Bowen Mountain Society, who publish the newsletter, asked me to give a talk at their AGM on the Observatory. After the talk, I received several approaches from locals who are interested in helping out with either the maintenance or operation of Crago.

There were 6 clear observing nights this year (up from 3 last year), with between 20 and 50 visitors each night. With these sorts of consistent numbers, we are short on volunteers to help to run the open nights. If you are interested to help, even if only for 1 or 2 nights a year, please get in touch with me. Any assistance would be gratefully received.

Until the lease situation is resolved, there is little we can do to invest in facilities at Crago. But we will continue to maintain the observatory and grounds as best we can under the circumstances.

I would like to thank our regular volunteers, Richard Jaworski, Ian Parr, Mick McCullough and Les Sara. Without them we would not be able to offer this wonderful facility to our members or the public.

For a site that's an hour drive from most of our member's, Crago offers a great viewing experience with steady seeing and semi-rural skies. There's plenty of space for members to set up their telescopes for viewing or imaging. I'd encourage you all to come and join us for a night of observing at least once during the year. Perhaps at our Christmas party in November.