

## President's AGM Report

This report gives us the opportunity to reflect and make comments on the various activities of the society from one AGM to the next, basically covering 12 months.

It's been a year of good observing for most of us, some excellent speakers and some exciting events. Personally it's been a year of much learning as I continue to venture into the world of Astronomy. A very pleasing aspect has been the number of newer members purchasing a first telescope or existing members updating their equipment. Well done to you all.

I'm getting a tad envious at the moment with the number of 2 inch eyepieces being paraded around the place and what about some of those large aperture Go-To scopes - just fantastic. We are certainly a growing club with new memberships and we receive a strong level of enquiry from the community. Most communication is via our email address and various phone numbers. At time of writing our website, when up and running, is bound to increase this further.

### Speakers

Bob Bee - Life cycle of stars  
 Dick Everett - Jupiter's moons, latest news  
 Peter Druery - Black holes, shuttle debris, great slides from the forest.  
 Dr Russell Cannon - large telescopes, Chinese trip, Dover Heights and other things  
 Michael West - Mars Society on developments for a possible manned flight  
 Dr Richard Hunstead Sydney University - Quasars big and small.  
 Ian Cook and Bruce Reardon also spoke to us on various topics

Ben Pawlutschenko, NSW astronomical Society - solar observing

I hope I haven't left anyone out, if so please accept my apologies. I think it's great that we have so many great speakers in our own club to call on to address our membership. I also thank the professional astronomers and those who are expert in their chosen field who make time and effort to visit, just fantastic.

### Field nights

The Forest, we made quite a few visits to the forest, dark skies, great company and a nice cabin to stay over night if you wish. We were blessed with some very fine viewing for the most part, thrown in were some new discoveries, like the magic mushrooms, strange circles in the rocks and worms that glowed green around midnight. We also had our minor dramas like cars getting stuck on dirt mounds, cars not starting next morning, fallen trees and a top up of the water tanks when things got a bit dry.

On a serious note we all need to be a bit careful with those close encounters of the wildlife kind, kangaroos and wombats roam freely and many of us have had a close shave. For those who journey back please take care on the roads and watch those storms. No more exploding trees please as it ruins our night vision as one of our members can attest.

The Oaks, great site but we have had weather problems which cancelled some of our schedule nights. Better luck this year both with the weather and access to the site. Unfortunately some gremlins crept in when we were not looking and ran an active campaign of padlock disruption. The Oaks serves us very well. It's a fair bit closer than

the Forest and provides a very useable sky, also it's ideal to visit off schedule.

### Events

Festival of North Sydney 2003. Great night, good networking including a television appearance by yours truly in which the issue of light pollution received good coverage. The date was Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> of July and it was attended by well over a thousand members of the public. This was a premier event celebrating the International Astronomical Union's annual conference held in Sydney.

We also did star nights for the girl guides and some international students. I am sure there have been some other events as well but certainly our schedule this year has been a bit easier to handle than bumper year we had before.

Bob Bee ran a successful programme out at the Mt Annan Botanical gardens on Friday nights in November which combined dinner and information about various sky stories, astronomical features and mythological mayhem. Great work

Observatory nights were unfortunately few. Of those nights we had some good crowds and we can be assured that many members of the public support the club in our role of providing this astronomical service. We know that by some advertising on radio, courtesy of David Everett and Bob's own excellent series of Heavens Above! articles in the Chronicle we have the advertising side of things covered. Thanks everyone.

### Acknowledgements

I'm never comfortable writing about this because I might forget someone who has made an important contribution over the year.

If I do please let me know so I can make amends and please accept my sincerest apologies.

John Rombi, starting meetings, the Oaks organiser and padlock specialist. Thanks for all your great support especially when I throw things at you short notice. I can't do it without you - thanks heaps

Ian Cook, looks after our emails courtesy of skyview@zipworld.com.au, he answers many public enquiries and is a great contributor to Prime Focus. He has helped me on numerous occasions when calls from the public make their way to my phone. Unfortunately at times I am not in a position to assist the callers. Also Ian is doing the running with the up and coming web site. Again thanks Ian

Dick Everett - Dick has been kind enough to act in a speaking role on many occasions. Also I am sure that I pass on many thanks from all the members you have helped in accessorising their scopes. Dick always is willing to pass on his great knowledge of the night sky - thanks Dick

Bob Bee - Bob's column in the Chronicle every fortnight is a fantastic avenue in which to reach the public. Also all the work that goes into our own journal is very appreciated. Going forward I am sure that the more contributors we have for the journal would make Bob's workload in the writing department a bit easier. Bob also has been busy in doing various astronomical presentations for the community. Also my particular thanks for being the societies liaison to outside committees, eg FANS and the new insurance discussions. What can I say?

Lloyd Wright - Lloyd is a great ambassador for the club and has helped me on many occasions with the Forest and cabin duties. Also thanks to Ned Pastor as well. Lloyd helps with the library and is always around to help with anything I ask. Thanks for all the support.

Peter Druery - Peter has helped out previously with some excellent speaking roles. In June last year he gave us a tour of those small black holes, as well as a grab bag of news. Peter collects and hands back the keys for the log cabin when we go down to the Forest. This is really a big help for us and very much appreciated - thanks Pete.

I know I must have left someone out but please be assured it's just an oversight. The society is only as good as its members, and what a great bunch of members we have. It's a pleasure to belong to such an enthusiastic and vibrant club.

At times I have felt the challenges have outweighed the enjoyment I seek. It should after all be a hobby, to enjoy and participate in, also as a release from work, career and family responsibilities. One of our members said I worry too much. I said it comes with the job. A reply back was it comes with me - wise words. The position of president is very important. Certainly I can take a breather every now and then but I cannot slacken off so to speak.

Some other wise words from another member were that it's not so much a job but a responsibility, and there lies the key to it. Even though there will be challenges ahead I think it is important for me to hold the passion and joy I feel for astronomy and this Society foremost in my mind. This is easily done.

I thank you all for allowing me to be involved in the club at the level I currently enjoy. It's been a pleasure to serve.

Yours sincerely  
Noel

### Alpha Centauri Our Closest Star. A Tripple Star System.

Alpha Centauri is a triple star system', consisting of Alpha Centauri A, Alpha Centauri B and Alpha Centauri C, which is a red dwarf known as Proxima Centauri. Alpha Centauri A & B are components of a binary star. They orbit each other every 80 years or so.

Proxima Centauri takes 500,000 years to do one revolution around Alpha Centauri A & B. Alpha Centauri A & B have mean separation of about 35 astronomical units and at closest approach as 11 astronomical units, one astronomical unit being the distance from Earth to the Sun (150 million kilometres.)

Proxima Centauri is approximately 13,000 astronomical units from A and B. Alpha Centauri is 4.3 light years from Earth, or just over 40 trillion km. If you were on Alpha Centauri looking back at our Sun, our Sun would be a 1<sup>st</sup> magnitude star near the Cassiopeian – Perseus border.

The diameter of Proxima Centauri is approximately 64,000 kms. However, they are not too sure whether Proxima Centauri is part of this system?... mmmmmmm... Interesting...

Lloyd Wright