



Australian Government
Department of Industry, Innovation
Science, Research and Tertiary Education



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 14 February 2013

Astronomers back to work at Siding Spring

Tonight (Thursday 14 February) astronomers will recommence observing with the 4-m Anglo-Australian Telescope at Siding Spring Observatory in northwest NSW.

These are the first observations to be made from the site since bushfire swept through it on 13 January.

Investigations have shown that the AAT and its building suffered no damage.

The Australian National University, which owns and manages the site, gave permission yesterday (Wednesday 13 February) for astronomers to re-start their operations.

The observations will be controlled from the headquarters of the Australian Astronomical Observatory in North Ryde, Sydney, supported by technical staff at the telescope.

Much work has been done to make the site safe.

The areas around the two destroyed buildings have been cordoned off, and arrangements made for the removal of debris and hazardous materials, and remediation of the area.

Hazardous trees have been cut down on the site and on the road leading to the observatory. The Warrumbungle Shire Council has cleaned rock debris off the road and made necessary repairs to reopen the road to traffic.

Tonight's observations will have the telescope looking up to a billion light-years out into space, to check the number of galaxies around our Galaxy. This is part of a test of the idea of Dark Energy.

The Australian Astronomical Observatory wishes to record the thanks of the staff and the scientific community to the many volunteer firefighters and emergency service staff who helped defend the observatory and to those who have worked tirelessly to ensure the centre has reopened so promptly.

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