

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)



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NSW a star attraction in the International Year of Astronomy

New South Wales is set to be a star attraction in the 2009 International Year of Astronomy, with a variety of stellar events and activities planned to celebrate the occasion.

Minister for Tourism and Minister for Science and Medical Research Jodi McKay said NSW was Australia's premier astronomy State, housing around 90 per cent of the country's astronomy infrastructure.

"The 2009 International Year of Astronomy is a year-long celebration of the exploration of our night skies and the astronomic discoveries that have been made over the past 400 years," Ms McKay said.

"The theme of the celebration is "The Universe, Yours to Discover" and the best place to discover it is NSW.

"The solar system has a great deal of mystery about it and these locations make it that much easier for kids to explore the universe.

"Tourism NSW has set up a dedicated webpage, to be launched today, which will be jam-packed with links to events and activities happening around the State throughout the year designed to show off our stunning night skies."

Some of the star gazing links featured on www.visitnsw.com/astronomy include:

- "Skywatching" itineraries for telescope enthusiasts;
- Star gazing destination tips;
- The historic Sydney Observatory, which is holding activities and events throughout the year, including a party for Galileo's birthday;
- The CSIRO Parkes Radio Telescope, which played a critical part in the worldwide broadcast of the 1969 Moon landing as portrayed in the Australian film *The Dish*. The observatory will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Moon landing with public open days in July;
- The Siding Springs Observatory near Coonabarabran, which is not only an important scientific facility but a popular tourist attraction for NSW. The site will host an open day in October as part of Coonabarabran's Festival of the Stars.

Ms McKay said the 2009 celebrations also provided a golden opportunity to engage young people in science.

"Astronomy is a great way to introduce kids to subjects such as mathematics and physics that feature prominently in a number of scientific fields," she said.

“The International Year of Astronomy will not only create new tourism opportunities but also provide a platform to excite people about science and make it relevant to children across the State.”

NSW Chief Scientist, Professor Mary O’Kane said the International Year of Astronomy highlighted NSW’s contribution to astronomical advancements both nationally and internationally.

“NSW is a world leader in astronomy and a number of related high-tech scientific fields,” Professor O’Kane said.

“The International Year of Astronomy is a fantastic time to acknowledge and support this expertise and to celebrate the good work being done by NSW astronomers and engineers to a wide audience.”

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