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LIFT-OFF: NASA'S ON THE WAY



Picture: MIKE WATT

NASA scientists are among 1000 professional and amateur international astronomers who will gather at a private property on the Tableland next month to view the total solar eclipse. Tourism industry identities Don and Judy Freeman (pictured) have organised the VIP eclipse event on their 20ha rainforest property at Kuranda. Mrs Freeman said a NASA-led group of 45 was among the 1000 people from the US, Japan, Germany, Spain, Italy and England jetting into the Far North, regarded as the best place in the world to view the eclipse on November 14.

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Patients 'helpless' after surgeon takes leave THE LONG WAIT

THE lone public plastic surgeon in Cairns has taken extended leave under the strain of a heavy patient load, leaving breast cancer patients without a local service.

Patients are being transferred to waiting lists in Brisbane and Townsville, which have up to a five-year wait for breast reconstruction.

Dr Peter Boyd, chairman of the Senior Medical Staff Association,

Tarina White
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said a private plastic surgeon who worked one day a week at Cairns Base Hospital had been struggling for years to tackle a growing list of public patients.

"The plastic surgeon has been crying out for help for a long time and I think he got burnt out," he said.

The hospital plans to recruit a

plastic surgeon with part of the \$3.75 million in specialist funding provided by the State Government this year, but Dr Boyd fears there could be a long wait to fill the vacancy.

"Recruitment would be a huge issue, especially if the person we had has resigned because there was a lot of work," he said.

Machans Beach breast cancer patient Vicki Buckley, who had one

breast removed, has waited almost a year to see the public plastic surgeon in Cairns. She was buoyed that funding was recently secured for a second plastic surgeon and had hoped it would speed up the process.

The news the city's only public plastic surgeon has gone on extended leave has left her feeling "helpless".

"We've lost a really essential part of some people's healing," Ms Buckley said.

Cairns and Hinterland Health Service chief executive Julie Hartley-Jones said 10 breast cancer patients had been waiting up to 433 days for reconstruction surgery before the service stopped in September. She said the hospital was in the process of recruiting a temporary replacement for the part-time surgeon who took extended leave in September.

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LOTUS GLEN PRISON IN LOCKDOWN AS TOOLS GO MISSING P5



Attraction: Hundreds of tourists such as Sakura Hara, Takako Sugahara and Karen Chen, pictured viewing an earlier eclipse at Glenelg in South Australia, are expected in the Far North for the big event on November 14. Inset: a solar eclipse.

NASA scientists here for eclipse

NASA scientists are among 1000 professional and amateur international astronomers gathering at a private property west of Cairns next month to view the total solar eclipse.

Tourism industry identities Don and Judy Freeman have organised the VIP eclipse event on their 20ha rainforest property at Kuranda.

Mrs Freeman said a NASA-led group of 45 was among the 1000 people from the US, Japan, Germany, Spain, Italy and England jetting into the Far North which was regarded as the best place in the world to view the eclipse on November 14.

She said the largest groups were from Japan and included some of the leading names in Japanese astronomy.

Mrs Freeman said for privacy reasons she could not reveal the names of those taking part but *The Cairns Post* understands

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that tours from the US are being lead by Paul D. Maley of the NASA Johnson Space Centre and a member of the NASA JSC Astronomical Society and former astronaut and veteran of four space shuttle missions Claude Nicollier.

Mrs Freeman said the people leading the international tours were "celebrity escorts" renowned in their fields.

"There will be professional as well as amateur astronomers, many are solar eclipse chasers," she said.

Mrs Freeman said their property, which included a natural amphitheatre, was regarded as one of the best spots to view

the eclipse and the Japanese who had inspected the site were taken aback.

She said no expense had been spared to create the best viewing areas.

She said more than 100 people would be staying on their property in luxuriously equipped tents, down to the best in bedding linen.

"They will be bringing with them the very best in high-tech equipment," Mrs Freeman said.

"We're bringing everything in, including toilets, hot showers and catering.

"They will have special viewing chairs. This is a VIP event with the best of food."

A fleet of coaches will transport the viewers from Cairns.

"It's strictly private, it is not open to the public."

Mrs Freeman said planning for the event started three years ago.

WILDLIFE

Croc transferred

AN estuarine crocodile trapped at Deep Creek near Kewarra Beach on Wednesday morning was transferred from the holding facility at Portsmith yesterday afternoon.

The trap was set at 3pm on Tuesday after reports a crocodile was spotted near the entrance to the creek.

A spokeswoman from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection said captured crocodiles were put to tender.

"When a crocodile is captured, croc farms or zoos are invited to express an interest in taking the animal," she said.

"They are normally placed within 48 hours."

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection Wildlife Management acting director Mike Devery said they could not confirm who claimed the 2.7m crocodile.

FASHION

Designer geared up

CAIRNS girl Michaela Paron will take on the bright lights of the Melbourne fashion industry tomorrow night when she competes in the Apex Teenage Fashion Awards.

Michaela, 15, took out second place for formal wear at the state final in Toowoomba last month, securing her place in the national final in Melbourne.

She said she was looking forward to the competition, which would see 56 competitors in four categories battle it out for the chance to win further training at the Whitehouse Institute of Design.

"On Saturday, I'll go to the Whitehouse Institute with the other designers for hair and makeup, then rehearsals start at 6pm," the St Monica's College student said.

"I'm pretty excited."

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