

# Smoke damage to four buildings housing telescopes at observatory

January 16 2013, by Sunanda Creagh

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A handout aerial image released by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service on 14 January 2013 shows the partly destroyed Siding Spring Observatory in the Warrumbungle National Park near Coonabarabran in New South Wales. Credit: EPA/NSW Rural Fire Service

Four buildings containing telescopes at Australia's largest astronomical observatory have suffered smoke damage in a bushfire, the Australian

National University said today.

Access to the [Siding Spring Observatory \(SSO\)](#) in the Warrumbungle Mountains remains very limited but the ANU, which runs the Observatory, said in a [statement](#) that an initial visual assessment had revealed that:

- Three buildings have been destroyed (The Lodge, a cottage and a storage building)
- Three buildings have been badly damaged (The Visitors Centre and two sheds)
- Four telescopes appear to have some smoke damage to their buildings

The centre will be closed for two weeks while the damage is assessed.

ARC Super Science Fellow at the Australian [Astronomical Observatory](#) Dr Amanda Bauer, who uses the 3.9m Anglo-Australian [Telescope](#) at the SSO—the largest [optical telescope](#) in Australia—said she understood that investigators were yet to check if the telescopes in the smoke-damaged buildings still worked.

"As far as I know, they haven't actually been inside the buildings yet. There are still fires in the area and they are working on getting water and sewerage up and running first," she said.

"We have made some attempts to remotely communicate with the computer systems and some of those have been successful."

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