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MEDIA RELEASE

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Famous Blue Mountains observatory added to State Heritage Register

International Year of Astronomy has gone out with a 'big bang' with a landmark amateur observatory, nestled in the Blue Mountains, added to the State Heritage Register.

Planning Minister, Tony Kelly, said the listing covers the Linden Observatory complex and all the instruments, working design drawings, machinery jigs and archives.

"It also includes about 40 hectares of bushland around the facility essential to preserving its dark sky conditions," the Minister said.

Member for Blue Mountains, Phil Koperberg, welcomed the announcement.

"The Linden Observatory, which dates from the late 1930s, is the legacy of amateur astronomer and leading optics and instrument maker Ken Beames (1899-1989)," Mr Koperberg.

"Mr Beames was a leading figure of 20th century amateur astronomy in Australia who built and funded the entire facility himself.

"It is a significant example of a mid-20th century amateur observatory which is still being used to this day by the Western Sydney Amateur Astronomy Group, whose members discovered two new supernovas – or exploding stars – in 1998 and 2000 at the observatory.

"It also carries State heritage value for its contribution to public education in the field of telescope making and astronomy," Mr Koperberg said.

The telescope designed and engineered by Mr Beames at Linden was the largest Australian made, amateur or professionally built telescope in NSW from the time of its construction in the late 1930s to the mid 1960s.

Mr Kelly said the telescope, together with its observatory dome, was one of the first in Australia to incorporate electric motors to operate the telescope and dome.

"Mr Beames' skill in building telescopes and other instruments won praise from both amateur and professional astronomers as masterpieces of craftsmanship and engineering," the Minister said.

Ian Bridges, one of three trustees of the Linden Observatory and surrounding land, said the heritage listing was important to honour the work of Mr Beames and preserve the continued operation of the facility.

"Ken Beames was one of the very few instrument makers working in Australia during the early and mid 20th century when most professional and amateur instruments were imported from Europe or America," Mr Bridges said.

"It was Mr Beames' wish to maintain the observatory for ongoing amateur and education use and this heritage listing will help achieve this," he added.
