

‘Australian’ comet captured by NASA

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The dramatic 'tail' is formed from dust illuminated by the sun as the comet passes through the solar system. (Supplied. : NASA image)

A spectacular image of a comet found from an Australian observatory is among the first pictures to be captured by NASA's new satellite telescope.

The Wide-Field Infrared Survey Explorer, or WISE, has been scanning the sky since January 14, beaming back more than 250,000 infrared images in the few weeks since then.

One of those images depicts Comet Siding Spring.

In 2007, astronomer Donna Burton became the first Australian woman to discover a comet, naming it "Siding Spring" after the NSW observatory where she worked.

She says the NASA image is much more detailed than what she has seen through her telescope.

"When I first saw it, it just looked like a very tiny little dot, that had moved across some images," she said.

“It didn’t even have a tail in those days because it had not gone round the sun.
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