

Environment and Communications References
Answers to questions on notice
Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio

Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000319
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Inquiry witnesses
Question Date: 21 November 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Duniam asked:

1. (a) Evidence has been given to this inquiry, including during the public hearings, that some potential witnesses have been pressured not to participate. What specific actions have been taken by senior management in order to determine whether potential witnesses from DCCEEW and/or the AAD were pressured in any way to avoid participating in this inquiry – and when?
- (b) Has it been determined whether there was any pressure exerted on any potential witness to not participate in this inquiry? If so, in how many cases – and what actions have been taken in respect of this conduct and when?

Answer:

1. (a) The Australian Antarctic Division Executive is not aware of any instances where staff have been pressured not to participate in the inquiry.

On 17 August 2023, the Head of the Australian Antarctic Division encouraged staff to read the Australian Public Service Commission's APS Values and Code of Conduct in practice, Section 6: Employees as citizens. Section 6.3 provides information for staff who would like to make a submission to, or appear as a witness before a parliamentary committee of inquiry in a personal capacity. This information can be accessed on the Australian Public Service Commission's website at apsc.gov.au/publication/aps-values-and-code-conduct-practice/section-6-employees-citizens.

On 6 October 2023, the Head of the Australian Antarctic Division included the following statement in her weekly email to the Division: "...*Some of our staff also appeared at the Inquiry. I respect their right to provide views and to inform the Senate. We are all accountable to the Parliament and, as the Chair of the Committee reminded us yesterday, it would be unlawful to threaten or disadvantage any witness on account of evidence given to the Committee.*"

- (b) There have been no reports to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water concerning pressure on witnesses.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding

Question No: IQ23-000322

Hearing Date: 16 November 2023

Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division

Topic: AAD operations

Question Date: 21 November 2023

Question Type: Written

Senator Duniam asked:

During the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years, and including as part of the search for financial savings:

(a) what specific changes have been made to the AAD's day-to-day operations and resourcing in Hobart?

(b) has AAD management formally or informally contemplated moving any of the AAD's operations to a State or Territory other than Tasmania? If so, what has been contemplated, and/or what action has been taken, in this respect?

(c) has AAD management been asked, at any time, to consider the possibility of moving any of the AAD's operations away from Tasmania? If so, by whom and when?

Answer:

In July 2023, the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) underwent a restructure to ensure greater functional alignment, moving from a six to a five branch structure.

The AAD has not considered or been asked to move its operations. Whilst the AAD is based in Hobart, its shipping operations have used ports in Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia to support the Australian Antarctic Program.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000323
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Morrison Government \$804.4 million package
Question Date: 21 November 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Duniam asked:

In respect of delays that have been experienced in the rollout of any of the elements of the \$804.4 million package announced by the Morrison Government in early 2022, and given Professor Webster's evidence at the hearing of 16 November:

- (a) over the course of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years, please list each of these elements for which delivery has been, or is being, delayed;
- (b) in each case, please also list the originally-planned date of completion and the currently-expected date of completion; and
- (c) has the originally-planned spending for any of the elements of the \$804.4 million package been reduced – and, if so, what are the previous and current allocations for each of those altered elements?
- (d) please list all of the funded elements, and the total allocated to each, of the \$804.4 Antarctic funding package announced by the Morrison Government in early 2022;
- (e) please list any further elements of Antarctic funding additional to the \$804.4 million, and the respective amounts of each of them, that were committed by the Morrison Government in the first five months of 2022.

Answer:

(a) The funding allocation of \$804.4 million in the October 2022-23 Budget, known colloquially as the 'Sustainable Funding Review' (SFR), was appropriated as a departmental measure. The measure addressed lapsing measures (such as the Antarctic Traverse capability and Million-Year Ice Core project), core Antarctic program activities (such as marine science, strategic planning and international engagement), and delivery of initiatives set out in the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan* (Strategy and Action Plan) including new activities such as ice sheet science, a Cleaner Antarctic strategy and new technologies (i.e. unmanned aerial vehicles). The Strategy and Action Plan sets out indicative timeframes for major initiatives to meet Australia's national interests in Antarctica. To date, this funding allocation has delivered various initiatives, including:

- **Krill aquaria and research** – in partnership with the University of Tasmania, the Australian Antarctic Program has scoped and had public works approval for a world-leading Southern Ocean research aquarium to study krill and krill ecosystems
- **Helicopters** – twin-engine helicopters, for enhanced safety and to support remote field work, have been included in the Antarctic program since 2021-22
- **Remote field science** – the division has delivered deployable field bases to support science projects such as the Denman Terrestrial Campaign
- **International engagement** – the division, working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has enhanced our international engagement.

(b) The funding measure is ongoing, and provides \$804.4 million over the first 10 years.

(c) There have been no reductions to this funding measure.

(d) The funding allocation of \$804.4 million was a single departmental measure to support sustainment of the Antarctic program and delivery of the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan*. As set out in response (a), sustainment activities included the Antarctic Traverse capability and Million-Year Ice Core project, marine science, strategic planning and international engagement; new activities included ice sheet science, a Cleaner Antarctic strategy and new technologies (i.e. unmanned aerial vehicles).

(e) There was a commitment in late 2021 for an additional \$32 million for supplementary shipping which was published in PAES 2021-22 as follows:

PAES 2021-22 – New Funding

The Government will provide supplementary funding of \$32.0 million to support the commissioning of the new icebreaker Nuyina, allowing the Division to charter additional shipping in 2021-22 to complete critical station