

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: IQ24-000044

Hearing Date: 29 January 2024

Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division

Topic: Antarctic stations

Question Date: 12 February 2024

Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Are there any abandoned stations that Australia once had responsibility for maintaining in the Antarctic? If so, please provide details of these, including whether there is any ongoing responsibility for these sites, and status/monitoring of impacts of deterioration.

Answer:

The former Wilkes station site is located approximately 3 km north of Australia's Casey research station. Originally established and operated by the United States from 1957 to 1959, Australia then occupied Wilkes station for 10 years until the opening of the original Casey station in 1969. The site contains a complex mix of deteriorated buildings, equipment and other materials resulting from 12 years of operation.

Under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, Australia is obliged to clean up abandoned work sites and waste disposal sites in Antarctica, where this can be done without creating greater environmental harm. During the 1990s Australia removed some bulk fuel and hazardous materials from the Wilkes site. Australian Antarctic Division scientists regularly visit to record the condition of the site and acquire data to support future clean-up efforts. Most recently, during the 2023-24 summer, the area was photographed by drone and the former waste disposal site was mapped using ground penetrating radar. This will enable AAD to develop an evidence based, actionable Clean-Up Strategy for Australian stations and sites, including the former Wilkes station site.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ24-000046
Hearing Date: 29 January 2024
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Update on Australia’s Antarctic research stations upgrades
Question Date: 12 February 2024
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Please provide an update on the upgrade of Australia’s Antarctic research stations and supporting infrastructure. What work has been undertaken to progress these projects, what is each project and over what timeframe will the works be carried out¹?

Answer:

In an effort to keep COVID-19 out of Australia’s Antarctic Research Stations, the Australian Antarctic Division’s 2020-21 through to 2022-23 seasonal activities were restricted to sustainment only. As a result, the department was not able to undertake any major building construction activity during this time.

Over the last 12 months, significant progress has been made to increase water security at Davis Station with a new 600,000L tank being installed recently and a new reverse osmosis system scheduled for install later this season. An additional 70,000L in fuel tank capacity has been delivered to Casey station with work to re-roof and renovate a number of buildings progressing well.

Works to upgrade Mawson station’s ICT infrastructure and waste water treatment plant are underway with a new plant to be installed later this year. Macquarie Island station also saw a number of station improvements including refurbishment of accommodation buildings, a new main resupply road diversion and installation of in-ground services and electrical distribution.

Antarctic infrastructure projects currently underway include:

Station	Project Title	Expected Periods
Casey	Building Management and Control System Replacement	2024 – 2026
Casey	Fuel Tanks	2024 – 2025
Casey	Green Store - Door	2024 – 2025
Casey	Hobby Hut Refurbishment	2023 – 2024
Casey	Melt Bell Pontoon	2023 – 2024
Casey	Red Shed Cold Porch	2023 – 2026
Casey	Red Shed Site Services	2024 – 2027
Casey	Transceiver Hut	2023 – 2025
Casey	Utilities Building	2012 – 2024
Casey	Waste Water Treatment Plant	2023 – 2024
Davis	Emergency Power House	2021 – 2026
Davis	High Voltage Upgrade	2022 – 2026
Davis	Living Quarters Recladding	2022 – 2025
Davis	Ops Building Refurbishment	2022 – 2025
Davis	Reverse Osmosis Desalination Plant 1	2022 – 2025

¹ See portfolio question number SQ21-001103 for 2021-22 Budget Estimates

Davis	Sleeping and Medical Quarters Boiler	2023 – 2024
Davis	Water Tank 1	2023 – 2025
Davis	Water Tank 3	2021 – 2024
Mawson	Bollard Extension	2021 – 2025
Mawson	Main Powerhouse - Fire Indicator Panel	2023 – 2024
Mawson	Red Shed - Building Management and Control System Cabinet	2022 – 2025
Mawson	Red Shed Refurbishment	2021 – 2025
Mawson	Red Shed Fire Doors Stage 1	2024 – 2025
Mawson	Waste Water Treatment Plant - Sewer Line	2023 – 2025
Mawson	Waste Water Treatment Plant	2023 – 2025
Mawson	Wharf	2023 – 2025
Mawson	Wombat ICT Cabinet removal	2023 – 2024
Mawson	Workshop Floor	2023 – 2025
Wilkins Aerodrome	Garage Repair	2023 – 2024
Wilkins Aerodrome	Medical Emergency Shelter / Traverse Replacement	2023 – 2025
Macquarie Island	Tsunami Refuges Upgrade	2023 – 2026
Macquarie Island	Installation of Rockfall and Foreshore Protections	2023 - 2026
Macquarie Island	Station Liveability Improvements	2022 - 2025
Macquarie Island	Improved fire prevention, detection and engineered response capability	2023 - 2026
Macquarie Island	Backup power and communications systems (ICT uplift)	2024 - 2026
Macquarie Island	Bulk fuel Storage System Replacement	2023 - 2026
Macquarie Island	New main resupply road diversion	2023
Macquarie Island	Accommodation – Hass House refurbishment	2023 – 2024
Macquarie Island	In-ground Services and Electrical Distribution	2021 - 2024
Macquarie Island	New Magnetic Quiet Zone (GA)	2021 - 2023
Macquarie Island	New ARPANSA building	2021 - 2023