



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration  
and Border Protection**

**DEPUTY SECRETARY**

18 August 2017

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

I write regarding the Committee's Inquiry into Australia's Antarctic Territory. Please find below a short submission representing the views of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (the Department) to inform your findings.

Maintaining Australia's national interests through managing the movement of people and goods across the border is fundamental to the Department's mission. We support the Government's security, economic and social objectives. The Department plays a role in Australia's future activities in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, particularly in exercising maritime security responsibilities in Antarctic and Southern Ocean waters.

Maritime Border Command (MBC) is a multi-agency task force that operates under the operational direction of the Australian Border Force (ABF), with Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel having command authority over both ABF and ADF assets. MBC conducts civil maritime security operations in the Australian Maritime Domain, including the Southern Ocean, to achieve operational outcomes on behalf of Australian Government partner agencies. MBC's operations are tailored to counter eight priority civil maritime security threats:

1. Illegal maritime arrivals
2. Illegal exploitation of natural resources
3. Illegal activity in protected areas
4. Marine pollution
5. Prohibited imports/exports
6. Compromise to bio-security
7. Piracy, robbery or violence at sea
8. Maritime terrorism

MBC leads and coordinates all Commonwealth civil maritime security activities through the Joint Agencies Maritime Advisory Group that is chaired by Commander MBC (a Rear Admiral). MBC also provides support to the Australian Maritime Safety Agency to meet Australia's Search and Rescue responsibilities.

On 27 April 2016 the Australian Government launched the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan. The Strategy sets out Australia's national Antarctic interests and the Government's vision for Australia's future engagement in Antarctica. The Department has been engaged in the whole-of-government consultations on the Strategy, particularly in relation to civil maritime security in the Southern Ocean.

The Government response to the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's Inquiry into Australia's future activities and responsibilities in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic waters, tabled on 4 February 2016, agreed the establishment of an inter-agency working group (IAWG) to review Commonwealth on water patrol, surveillance and research requirements (Recommendation 15).

The Department leads this IAWG, which was formed in September 2016 and is exploring available assets, capacity gaps and best-practice models for managing Australia's future needs in Antarctic and Southern Ocean waters, including consideration of a national fleet approach to the acquisition and management of Australian vessels. The IAWG is drafting a consolidated report for consideration by relevant departments and agencies within the next few months.

The Department will continue to work collaboratively with partner agencies to enhance Australia's long-term interests in Antarctica, including through the IAWG and involvement in the development and implementation of other recommendations from the Australian Antarctic Strategy.

I look forward to the findings of the inquiry.

Yours sincerely

**Linda Geddes**  
Acting Deputy Secretary  
Policy Group

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