

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: IQ23-000283

Hearing Date: 05 October 2023

Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)

Topic: Nuyina

Question Date: 23 October 2023

Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

1. Has the AAD assessed the financial costs of Nuyina refuelling in Burnie compared with Hobart?
2. Has expedition time been lost, especially for Antarctic science access/science days, due to having to refuel in Burnie?
3. If so how can this be managed in the future?
4. What is the expected or optimal expedition time to the Antarctic under a one-ship model, and how often per year is this likely to be achieved?
5. What is the expected optimal time (without interruptions) for “on ice science” or Antarctic fieldwork days (across all programs) to be conducted this summer out of the total expedition time?
6. Does the department have estimates, expectations or operational budgets for the next 3 years in this regard (ie will it be the same as this year, increasing or decreasing)?
7. Please update developments in relation to discussions with the Tasmanian State Government on alternative refuelling options for the Nuyina in Hobart (that don't include going north to Burnie).

Answer:

1. Yes. The additional cost estimate above a Hobart refuelling for 2023-24 is approximately \$875,000.
2. No.
3. Not applicable.
4. Expedition time is highly variable and dependant on the conditions required for various projects, station resupply and changeover activities. Safety and logistics requirements at individual stations as well as conditions such as wildlife breeding cycles, low snow cover on vegetation, ice free ocean areas, and sea ice thickness and distribution, are taken into account. This is all then prioritised in line with government priorities and planned for the work days required for tasks to determine the optimal expedition time each season.
5. Each science project is different and as outlined above the AAD tailors the time for projects within the required conditions, budgets and priorities to meet individual project needs as best as possible within available resources.
6. The forward estimates in the department's 2023-24 Portfolio Budget Statements show a growth in funding for Outcome 3 for each year over the next three years.
7. The Tasmanian Government is actively considering alternative refuelling options for the Port of Hobart and is in discussions with the Department.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000285
Hearing Date: 05 October 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: Science programs - final plan
Question Date: 23 October 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

CHAIR: Did any scientists have their plans approved and then have them cancelled? We've heard evidence that that is the case...

Ms Campbell: I would say none were approved. There were certainly some that were in a draft plan, which I never approved. I approved a final plan, and that is fully delivered, but I do understand that some people had greater expectations that have not been met. I don't know the numbers of scientists in that.

1. Does the AAD CEO (Ms Campbell) have final say in which programs make the final plan?
2. What stage of the approval process is the 'draft plan', and what are the further assessments done after the 'draft plan' stage to reach a 'final plan'?
3. In relation to proposed science programs by AAD staff within the science branch in the draft plan, how many in total were submitted for this summer?
4. How many were approved in this year's final plan?
5. How many programs in total (from with AAD and external) are in the final plan for this summer?
6. Please provide a breakdown of these.
7. How many programs in this year's final plan were external to the AAD science branch?
8. How was rejection of elements of the draft plans (ie didn't make final plan) managed in terms of feedback to scientists?
9. What happens to draft science programs that are not approved (e.g. are they held over for future consideration)?
10. Does the advice of the Australian Antarctic Science council play a role in selecting programs for the final plan?
11. What other interests external to the AAD influence the selection of programs for the final plan?
12. If so, how? Please provide examples.

Answer:

1. The AAD Head of Division approves the season plan and the operational support for all activities each season, including science projects.
2. At the start of the season planning process a list of projects is collated that includes any that could be undertaken in Antarctica during the season. This list of projects is subject to a supportability assessment which is undertaken with the input of all AAD branches to consider the operational feasibility. A draft Season Plan is then prepared on the most efficient and effective means of delivering the season. The Season Plan is in draft form until it is approved by the Head of Division.
3. 21 AAD led projects requested logistic support in 2023-24.
4. As at 26 October 2023, 14 AAD led projects will receive support.

5. As at 26 October 2023, 26 science projects are included in the season plan.
6. As at 26 October 2023, there are 42 Australian Antarctic Science projects underway. Only 26 of these are receiving logistic support this season and therefore appear in the season plan. Of the remaining 16 projects, 8 are Australia-based and did not require operational support (ie their research this year is desk/lab based), the remaining 8 projects asked for operational support but the AAD was unable to support them this year. These unsupported projects are still active and Australia-based project activity (ie desk or lab work) will continue but they are not being provided with the logistic support they requested from AAD. These 16 projects are not included in the season plan but they are still part of the Australian Antarctic Science Program.
7. 21 projects are led by Chief Investigators external to the science branch. Of these, 10 include AAD staff collaborators as part of their science teams.
8. All Chief Investigators requesting operational support for science projects receive written advice from the AAD about the outcome of their request. Projects that are not supported receive email advice to this effect.
9. Chief Investigators are invited to contact AAD to discuss options such as deferring or otherwise varying their project in light of this advice. The AAD works closely with Chief Investigators where operational support is not available in full or at all, to explore other options to support their projects in future seasons or through other avenues.
10. The Australian Antarctic Science Council reviews the preliminary prioritisation of science project requests undertaken by the AAD.
- 11-12. All science project requests must align with the Australian Antarctic Science Strategic Plan (determined by the Australian Antarctic Science Council) which gives effect to the Government's priorities outlined in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and Action Plan. Where the project also aligns with other Government priorities (such as through other Government agencies participating the Antarctic science program), this may also be considered. The timing and prioritisation of projects with finite Commonwealth funding windows (such as Australian Research Council or other grants) may also be considered in prioritising project support.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000286
Hearing Date: 05 October 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: AAD staff meetings
Question Date: 23 October 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

CHAIR: Where have you heard that from, with those pressures, Ms Campbell? Have you been out, for example, to talk to staff in the office? An all-staff meeting? How did you determine that?

Ms Campbell: Yes, I've heard it through a range of processes. I have had all-staff meetings where I've heard that. I've talked to specific branches where I've heard this. It's across a range of branches. I think the APS survey also provides some—

CHAIR: Are you able to wander the corridors and talk to staff directly, like informally?

Ms Campbell: I certainly am. I aspire to do it more than I do. But it's a wonderful opportunity to meet for me. I've had conversations with the stations as well.

1. How many all-staff meeting have been undertaken in each of the last three financial years?
2. How many were attended by the head of the AAD?
3. Please outline dates of meetings with specific branches in each of the last three financial years?

Answer:

1. There have been 10 divisional meetings since the current Head of the Australian Antarctic Division began in May 2023. The former Head of the Australian Antarctic Division held regular division meetings approximately every 4-6 weeks.
2. The current Head of the Australian Antarctic Division has attended each division meeting over the past 6 months. It has been practice for the Division Head or Acting Division Head to attend Division meetings over the past three years.
3. To date the current Head of the Australian Antarctic Division has attended two branch meetings. One with the then Assets and Technology Branch on 1 June 2023 and one with the Science Branch on 10 August 2023. Due to internal restructures, it is not possible to provide dates of meetings between the former Head of the Australian Antarctic Division and specific branches.

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Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio

Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000287
Hearing Date: 05 October 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: O'Kane Review
Question Date: 23 October 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Prof. Bergstrom: You're correct, in that the report recommendations were accepted fully. The report has many good points in it. The process of the report was strange. Usually, when reports are commissioned, they come back to government departments, they get the view of the staff, to check for validity, and then a considered decision is made about the recommendations. In the case of the O'Kane review, it didn't even come back to the Antarctic Science Program leaders for checking. Things were missed.

1. Please verify if this is correct?
2. If so, why were Antarctic Science Program leaders not included in the process of finalising the O'Kane Review?
3. If not, which Antarctic Science Program leaders were included/consulted on the draft report?
4. Please outline the progress on meeting the 11 recommendations of the O'Kane report.

Answer:

1. The independent expert review was commissioned by the then Director of the AAD to consider the quality, impact and relevance of science in the Science Branch, in light of the appointment of a new Chief Scientist. The report and its recommendations were considered and subsequently accepted by the then AAD Director.

2-3.

AAD staff, including staff from the science Branch, and science program leaders, were consulted in the preparation of the report. The report was an independent external review and therefore reflected the findings of the review panel.

4. Progress on the implementation of the O'Kane Report is as follows:

Recommendation 1:	Science at the centre of the AAD	AAD has stated the objective that 'science is the central driver of all the AAD's activities'. Science at the forefront of AAD was also one of the key principles of the Divisional restructure that occurred in July 2023.
Recommendation 2:	Decadal plan to drive science priorities and programs	A Decadal Plan for Antarctic science is being developed and is expected to be provided to Government by the end of the year.

Recommendation 3:	Role of Science Branch	The Science Branch has undergone a restructure and refocussing of its priorities and operations, consistent with the roles outlined in this recommendation.
Recommendation 4:	East Antarctic Monitoring Program (EAMP)	The East Antarctic Monitoring Program has been established in the science branch which will consider future outlook.
Recommendation 5:	Integrated Digital East Antarctica (IDEA)	The Integrated Digital East Antarctica program has been initiated in the Science Branch which will consider future outlook.
Recommendation 6:	Science collaboration	The AAD and the Australian Antarctic Science Council are actively building science collaborations across the program including through the collaborative development of the decadal plan.
Recommendation 7:	Science capability	Current and future science capability mapping is integrated with AAD forward business, budget and capability planning. AAD science branch is working closely with research partners to identify opportunities for effective collaboration to strengthen capabilities.
Recommendation 8:	Science infrastructure and logistics support	Science planning and prioritisation is informed by mapping of infrastructure and logistic support and with advice from the AASC, as outlined in this recommendation.
Recommendation 9:	Communication	Antarctic science communication is central to AAD's outreach and engagement with Government and is anticipated to be a key part of the implementation of the Decadal Plan.
Recommendation 10:	Leveraging capability in Tasmania	The AAD actively seeks opportunities for strengthening cooperation with other Tasmanian entities which engage in Antarctic and Southern Ocean research.

Recommendation 11:	Getting there from here	Implementation of the recommendation is well underway.
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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding

Question No: IQ23-000288

Hearing Date: 05 October 2023

Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)

Topic: Health and safety representatives

Question Date: 23 October 2023

Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator BILYK: With the expeditioners, how many elected health and safety reps do you have at the stations, and how many have completed the training under the act?

Ms Campbell: I heard the testimony from the union on this yesterday. My understanding is we have workplace health and safety officers at each station.

Senator BILYK: Are they elected?

Ms Campbell: They're not elected, but I heard the testimony and the concern of the union with that. I've already reached out to my health and safety team here in Canberra and am happy to have a conversation with the union about how we meet the training and the obligations and the requirements that meet the needs of expeditioners. So, I certainly took that action—

Senator BILYK: So, by estimates, you should be able to give me an update on how many have been elected and undergone the training—

Ms Campbell: My understanding is the election and the training, but we'll certainly work with the unions on a model that's fit for purpose for our stations—

Mr Sullivan: We'll definitely give you an update on it.

1. How many health and safety reps are at each station? How many have completed training under the act?

Answer:

1. The Australian Antarctic Division do not have Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), as defined in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, on station for various practical reasons. Instead, each station has one or two Workplace Health and Safety Officers (WHSOs), who undertake a similar function to the HSRs.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding

Question No: IQ23-000289

Hearing Date: 05 October 2023

Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)

Topic: Three-year planning outlook

Question Date: 23 October 2023

Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Mr Sullivan: "I instigated the three year planning outlook. That was ahead of Ms Campbell taking up the position. We obviously don't know what future budget is until after the budget has been handed down. So, after the budget was handed down, we started to look at what was achievable given the budget we had".

Ms Campbell: "when I started, maybe the day before budget in May 2023, we had commenced a three year planning process which was about looking at what we could do to achieve all the outcomes we wanted within our means"?

1. Is the three year planning 'outlook' referred to by Mr Sullivan the same as Ms Campbells comment three year planning 'process'?
2. If so, Ms Campbell appears to be implying that the three year planning outlook/process underway prior to the last budget incorporated a 'budget expectation' which is contrary to the comment by Mr Sullivan just prior on Hansard ('after the budget was handed down, we started to look at what was achievable given the budget we had"). Please clarify?
3. Please provide documents relating to, or a copy of, the 3-year planning outlook or process referred to in these comments.
4. Given you acknowledge the uncertainty of future budgets, how do you originally establish your three-year planning outlook (for example based on previous budget levels or other forward guidance?).
5. Are these 3-year planning outlooks provided to the Minister prior to the budget being handed down?
6. Did the minister review this specific three-year planning outlook referred to in the comment by Mr Sullivan prior to the last budget?
7. Are these planning programs/processes used in any way to guide the divisions future budgets?
8. Mr Sullivan said you obviously don't know what the future budget is until after the budget has been handed down, are we to understand both Mr Sullivan or Ms Campbell had no input into setting the future budget handed down (based on this planning outlook or otherwise)?
9. If so, how did the government set its budget for the division if it doesn't consult with senior bureaucrats such as yourselves?

Answer:

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water initiated a new internal process in the first quarter of 2023 to develop a three-year plan and outlook. The purpose of the three-year plan and outlook is to develop a comprehensive plan for the Australian Antarctic Division that aligned with the current budget and forward estimates, delivers commitments to the Australian Government and is deliverable based on the logistics capability, human resources capability and dependencies between activities. The three year plan will look to identify priorities within existing budget and resourcing allocations and may

identify additional activities for Government consideration through the usual Government processes. Development of the three year plan is still underway and will be provided to the Minister for consideration once complete.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000290
Hearing Date: 05 October 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: Division overspend
Question Date: 23 October 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Mr Sullivan: “as I said, last year the division overspent extraordinarily.” (note later quantified as \$42m on Hansard by Mr Hanlon)

Mr Hanlon said: “in relation to the bottom up (internal budget) process employed by the department “We go out to the business areas and say: this was your expenditure last year. Let us know if there are any pressures. We run that process to find out if there are any pressures within the department”.

1. Was the “extraordinary divisional overspend” noted as a “pressure within the department” or division through this process, and if so, when, and by whom?
2. When exactly did Mr Sullivan and/or the department finance committee become aware of the overspend?
3. In relation to the three-year planning outlook or process, did you factor in the ‘overspend’ into this process once detected, and was this planning outlook changed in anyway prior to the last budget once the overspend was detected?
4. Was the Minister informed about this overspend and any possible implications to the AAD’s future operational capability, especially in delivering its science programs or final plan?
5. Was the minister informed measures would need to be taken within the AAD (branches) to “live within its means”, if so when and by whom?
6. Was it ever discussed within the department (not the division) or with the Minister that some proposed science programs in the current draft plan (Ms Campbell: “I would say none were approved. There were certainly some that were in a draft plan, which I never approved. I approved a final plan, and that is fully delivered, but I do understand that some people had greater expectations that have not been met) would most likely not proceed this summer (be delayed, deferred, de prioritised) so the division could ‘live within its means’?
7. Was the Minister made aware that active staff recruitment within the AAD would be impacted by the division and branches having to live within their means?
8. If so, please provide details.
9. If so, was the Minister aware of the likely impact this would have on AAD science staff morale?
10. Did the department have conversations with the Minister or government seeking additional funds to cover this overspend in the last budget, to avoid measures currently being taken within the AAD to “live within our means” (leading to a 16% cut at AAD operating budgets at branch level noted in Hansard from Ms Campbell’s internal email to staff)?

Answer:

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water was cognisant of the pressure on AAD’s budget for the cost of additional fuel and shipping due to the unavailability of the Nuyina. This pressure was managed at a departmental and divisional level throughout the 2022-23 financial year.

As is standard practice, the department's Secretary, as the Accountable Authority, and the department's Executive Board are regularly briefed on the department's budgetary position and take relevant action throughout the year to ensure fiscal responsibility for all resourcing of the department.

In line with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the Secretary is responsible for the department's operating and staffing budget, including managing within available appropriations provided by the Parliament. This is not a ministerial responsibility.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000292
Hearing Date: 05 October 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: Decadal science plan
Question Date: 23 October 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

CHAIR: Just a couple of quick ones. When is the decadal science plan due? Is it soon?

Prof. Webster: Our expectation is that it will be finalized at the end of the year. We presented the draft high level science outcomes to the Antarctic Science Council at their meeting on 28 September. They've given broad indications of support for the direction of the science. We now need to build implementation plans under each of those outcomes, which will occur over the next couple of months. There will then be a detailed period of consultation and engagement across government and with additional stakeholders. We are still on track to have that finalised by the end of the year.

1. What is the process for setting the decadal science plan?
2. What is the role of the AAD science branch in its establishment?
3. What is the role of the Chief Scientist in its establishment?
4. Can the draft plan or the final plan be changed or influenced by the AAD science branch and its senior management prior to its release?
5. For example, can AAD staff (including CEO, Chief Scientists) influence ambition or priorities in the draft plan (such as sea level science, climate science, biodiversity)?
6. Is it expected that the final plan is ultimately delivered by the science branch at the AAD?
7. Does the final plan have to be accepted by the Minister or Government?
8. Once released (and if need be accepted by Government) is the final plan a guide for the AAD or is it binding in terms of AAD priorities/ambition?
9. When is the decadal science plan due (exact date if available)?

Answer:

1. The development of a decadal science plan was a recommendation of the O'Kane Review of the Australian Antarctic Division's science in November 2021 and a subsequent commitment in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20-year Update in February 2022. The decadal plan is being developed through extensive consultation with science and policy experts and key government stakeholders across the Australian Antarctic Program to identify the highest priority outcomes for Antarctic and Southern Ocean science during the next decade.
2. The AAD Science Branch is contributing subject matter expertise to and assistance with coordinating the development of the decadal plan.
3. The AAD Chief Scientist is leading the coordination of the development of the decadal plan.

4-5.

The Australian Antarctic Science Council has actively sought contributions on the development of the draft decadal plan from AAD staff (including the science branch, Head of Division and Chief Scientist) as well as other Antarctic science and policy experts and key stakeholders. The department and the AAD will have further opportunity to advise government on the final decadal plan when it is submitted to Government for consideration.

6-9.

The decadal plan will be provided to the Government for consideration and, as is usual practice, the department along with other relevant agencies will provide advice to Government at this time. Subject to the Minister's consideration, it will then serve as a guide for members of the Australian Antarctic Program, which includes the AAD, the university sector, government science organisations such as CSIRO, the Bureau, Geoscience Australia, and Commonwealth and state agencies with responsibilities in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. It is anticipated that the draft decadal science plan will be provided to Government by the end of 2023.

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

Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000294
Hearing Date: 05 October 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: AAD funding pressures
Question Date: 23 October 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

1. In evidence Mr Hanlon stated that:

"I need to stress a point here. There has not been a 15 per cent cut to the division's budget. Lower funding availability in this financial year compared to last financial year is simply because of termination of temporary measures that were there because the RSV Nuyina was out of service."

If the "lower funding availability" is simply because of the temporary measures that were in place, and these are now not in place, how is funding for other projects impacted, or overall funding in the budget impacted at all?

2. Despite there being no 'funding shortfall', the budget has been subject to pressures according to evidence by Mr Sullivan.

"It wasn't a funding shortfall; it was what the forward estimates originally had. The additional pressure that came on us was twofold post the budget. One thing post the budget was the whole-of-government decision with respect to contractors, legal and IT..."

The second pressure, then, which was post-budget as we worked through the budget at a departmental level, was ensuring that the enabling services support for the Antarctic Division was what it needed to be, particularly in the light of the Russell review—the support in terms of budget management, human resources, compliance management et cetera."

Is the funding change due to the temporary measures described by Mr Hanlon, or as a result of the pressures described by Mr Sullivan? Or both?

3. Both Mr Hanlon and Mr Sullivan cited a \$42m overspend. What specific impact has that had on the AAD budget going forward?

Answer:

1. The lower funding availability in 2023-24 is due to both the cessation of temporary measures and the post Budget pressures identified.

There is no impact on projects or overall funding in the budget due to the ceasing measures as these were temporary measures for the engagement of additional shipping whilst the RSV Nuyina was out of service and these vessels are no longer required.

2. As above, the funding change is due to both the cessation of temporary measures and post-budget pressures identified by Mr Hanlon and Mr Sullivan.

3. The final audited operating result against budget for the Australian Antarctic Division for 2022-23 was an overspend of \$41.4 million. The previously advised interim operating result was an overspend of \$42.2 million.

The \$41.4 million overspend was due to an additional \$38.0 million in expenditure on shipping and fuel, as a direct consequence of the RSV Nuyina being out of service for most of the year. The other \$3.4 million of overspend was due to an accounting reclassification of expenditure from capital to operating relating to an Antarctic ICT project.

Given additional shipping is not required in 2023-24 and the one-off nature of the accounting reclassification, neither will have an impact on the AAD budget going forward.