



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

# **The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade**

**Inquiry into the opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with the  
Republic of France**

**May 2020**

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment



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## **Introduction**

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee for the Inquiry into the Opportunities for Strengthening Australia's relations with the Republic of France. This submission provides a snapshot of the department's activities undertaken with France, and opportunities to further strengthen these relations.

The department has a strong history of cooperation with the Republic of France. We engage with France to influence international policy settings for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food and sustainable resource management, water and environmental areas. Identified against each of the Terms of Reference below are a number of areas where there are opportunities for strengthening Australia's relationship with France.

### **1. Increasing bilateral trade and investment, including future growth areas for exports and imports, and opportunities in the mining industry**

#### Existing agricultural trade and opportunities for future growth areas

France and Australia have a thriving bilateral trade and investment relationship which the department, in close collaboration with DFAT, is working to expand. This includes through the negotiation of a comprehensive and ambitious Free Trade Agreement with the European Union (EU).

Australia and the European Union are negotiating a comprehensive and ambitious free trade agreement (FTA). The FTA has the potential to encourage increased two-way trade and investment flows, further strengthening and expanding Australia and France's economic partnership.

#### *Background*

Agricultural, fisheries and forestry trade between Australia and France was valued at around \$1.11 billion in 2018-19, with the balance of two-way trade heavily in France's favour. In 2018-19 Australian exports were valued at \$224m, including \$111m worth of canola, \$29m of skins and hides, and \$15m worth of lamb and mutton. Australia, in turn, imported \$906m worth of agricultural, fisheries and forestry goods from France during this period, including \$318m worth of wine, \$93m worth of spirits and liqueurs, and \$59m worth of bread products. Two-way trade has been steady in the past five years, with Australian exports averaging around \$214m annually and French imports averaging \$790m annually over the past five financial years. Demand for canola from Australia and a steadily increasing demand for French wine and spirits in Australia drives much of the agricultural trade.

In support of the Australia-EU FTA negotiations, Australia hosted a delegation of French farmers in 2019, under the auspices of the Australia-France Initiative (AFiniti). The visit deepened engagement at the farmer and representative body levels and targeted on the ground advocacy about Australian agriculture in support of the Australia-EU FTA. Events, such as this delegation visit, facilitate valuable farmer-to-farmer linkages and allow for open and honest conversations and relationship building, leading to improved trade relationships.



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**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

The department maintains a network of Agriculture Counsellors in key markets around the world, including Europe. The department has posted two Agriculture Counsellors to Brussels, Belgium, with responsibility for Australia's agricultural trade interests with both the European Union and individual member states, including France. The department has also posted an Agriculture Counsellor to London, United Kingdom, who, in addition to focussing on agriculture trade between Australia and the UK, represents Australia in the OECD's agriculture forums on trade, productivity and sustainability. The work of the department, through the Agriculture Counsellors, plays a critical role in facilitating key international relationships for the benefit of Australian exporters and importers of agricultural products.

**2. Enhancing political, security and defence cooperation, including through initiatives such as the Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Australia and France signed in 2017, and the Strategic Partnering Agreement signed in 2018 for the Future Submarine Program**

Fisheries

Australia and France are both fishing nations and we work with France on fisheries matters within their competence, including fisheries surveillance and monitoring for certain external territories like Kerguelen Islands and New Caledonia (both of which are adjacent to valuable Australian fisheries within Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)). Australia could strengthen the relationship with France in further cooperation in the science and management of our toothfish fisheries and in combatting IUU fishing.

*Background*

Australia cooperates closely with France in combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Pacific Ocean. While significant inroads have been realised at the regional and national level, IUU fishing remains a major obstacle to achieving sustainable fisheries and food security at the global level. Increasing demand for fisheries products and pressure on wild fisheries resources means that IUU fishing remains of great concern to responsible States.

In the Pacific, Australia and France also engage in significant regional security architecture. We are both members of the Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (QUAD), along with the United States and New Zealand. This group participates in an annual, multi-national fisheries surveillance operation called 'Operation Nasse', aimed at deterring IUU fishing and identifying operators that are not complying with the international fisheries rules in the Pacific.

Australia and New Caledonia collaborate on approaches to managing IUU incursions and surveillance which has resulted in New Caledonia apprehending IUU vessels operating near our maritime jurisdiction that were challenging for Australia to reach.

For Australia, key threats and impacts from IUU fishing exist in our EEZ and on the high seas. These include threats to maritime sovereignty and heightened strategic tensions; depletion of living marine resources including straddling, highly migratory and other high seas fish stocks; integrity of international efforts to cooperatively manage fish stocks; marine and terrestrial biosecurity; environment and ecosystem degradation; and commercial viability of legitimate operators. IUU fishing and its impacts are considered in the context of broader efforts to enhance Australia's maritime security.



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**Department of Agriculture,  
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France's EEZ surrounding New Caledonia is adjacent to Australia's, and so we have shared interests in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. France and Australia are both members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Australia values its close working relationship with France in relation to the management of the toothfish fisheries in our adjacent EEZs on the Kerguelen Plateau. Such a close working relationship is important due to the biological and ecological linkages across the Kerguelen Plateau in the Southern Ocean. A joint scientific understanding of the region's ecosystems and population dynamics of toothfish across the Plateau can ensure the long-term sustainability of fisheries and underpins Australia's marine stewardship council certification. Heard Island and the McDonald Islands is our most valuable Commonwealth managed finfish fishery. The toothfish fisheries on the French side of the Kerguelen Plateau are also France's second most valuable commercial fishery.

Antarctic and Southern Ocean cooperation

In conjunction with DFAT, the department has been deeply engaged with France in the governance and management of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean region, via the international agreements and fora of the Antarctic Treaty system (ATS). Australia is well placed to continue to cooperate on science, coordination, data-sharing and efficient sharing of logistics with France in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. Australia's cooperation with France has meant we are viewed as a trusted partner, our expertise and experience is valued, and Australia's interests in Antarctica and the Southern Oceans are protected.

The Department is supportive of seeking opportunities to further strengthen this cooperation particularly in the areas of sharing scientific research and innovation, in using Hobart as the gateway to Antarctica for resupply and in using our standing as leading and influential Antarctic nations to pursue shared strategic goals in the ATS.

*Background*

France is one of Australia's key partners in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. We are geographical neighbours – the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) borders France's Antarctic territory on both sides (see Map 1) and the French-Italian station Concordia is located in the AAT.

We have a strong shared history of engagement in the Antarctic Treaty system, the international governance framework which preserves Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science. Australia and France are original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and were the lead proponents of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Environmental Protocol) which indefinitely bans mining in Antarctica.

In the Antarctic Treaty system, Australia and France worked together on initiatives to protect and conserve the unique Antarctic and Southern Ocean environment. Since 2012 Australia and France (together with the European Union) have been seeking the adoption of the East Antarctic Marine Protected Area (EAMPA) in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). If adopted the EAMPA would contribute to a representative system of Marine Protected

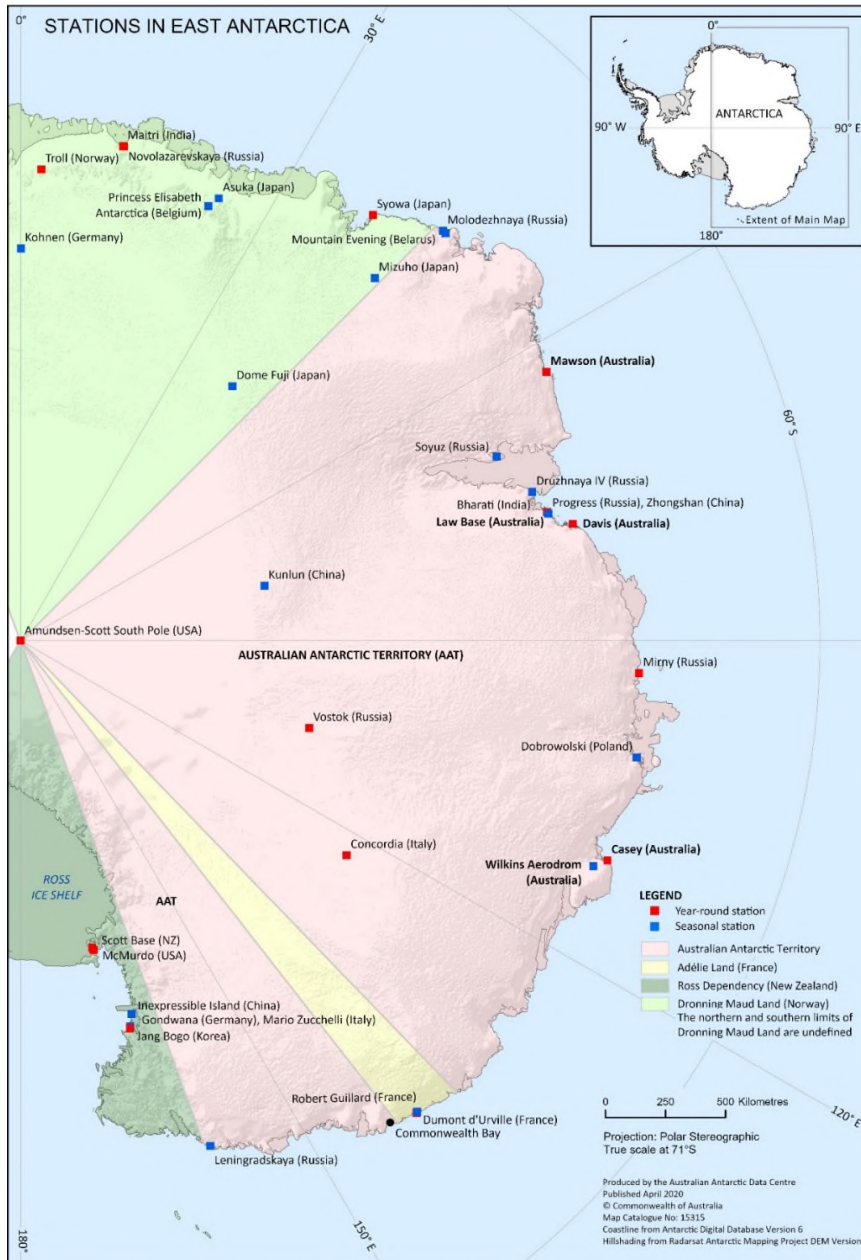


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**Department of Agriculture,  
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Areas in the CAMLR Convention Area and conserve examples of biodiversity in the high latitudes of the Indian Ocean sector of the Southern Ocean.

In the Southern Ocean we have adjacent exclusive economic zones (EEZs) on the Kerguelen Plateau and work closely together to manage the valuable toothfish fisheries, as outlined above.

**Map 1 Stations in East Antarctica** (Source: Australian Antarctic Data Centre, 2020)





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Australia also derives significant economic benefit from France's use of Hobart as an Antarctic gateway. France operates or jointly operates three Antarctic facilities in the area of the continent directly to Australia's south:

- Dumont D'Urville research station (for which France is the sole operator)
- Concordia research station at Dome C, over 1,000 kilometres inland from the coast (jointly operated with the Italian national Antarctic program); and
- Cape Prud'Homme station, which is a staging facility on the coast for inland traverse operations to and from Concordia station (also jointly operated with the Italians).

The French national Antarctic program delivers most of the resupply and personnel changeover for these three stations from Hobart each summer through 4-5 voyages of its icebreaker *L'Astrolabe*. Consequently, most of the supplies and much of the equipment used by the French national Antarctic program are purchased from Tasmanian businesses. French scientists, administrators and operational staff frequently visit the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) in Hobart en route to and from Antarctica, and this has promoted a significant amount of collaboration between the two nations.

In May 2018, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and President Emmanuel Macron signed the Vision Statement on the Australia-France Relationship. The Vision Statement includes a section on Antarctic and Southern Ocean cooperation acknowledging the Leaders' commitment to work together to advance shared policy, science and logistic objectives.

A Treaty between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic on Cooperation in the Maritime Areas adjacent to the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands entered into force on 1 January 2005. The Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement of Fisheries Laws between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic in the Maritime Areas adjacent to the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands entered into force in 2011. Together, these treaties facilitate cooperative enforcement activities between Australia and France to tackle IUU fishing and encourages scientific research on marine living resources.

The 2012 Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on Antarctic Cooperation between the AAD within the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the French Polar Institute Paul-Emile Victor (IPEV) is a non-binding arrangement on cooperation in Antarctic science, coordination, data-sharing and efficient sharing of logistics.

The AAD and IPEV share Antarctic logistical capabilities on an annual basis through collaborative "quid-pro-quo" arrangements. For example, previously France has provided shipping support to Macquarie Island while Australia has provided aviation access through Wilkins Aerodrome. In 2019-20 IPEV requested, and was provided, assistance from the AAD to resupply *Dumont d'Urville* and the two joint French-Italian stations following damage to its icebreaker *L'Astrolabe*.

Australia and France have a shared interest in science excellence and innovation, including through glaciology, climate science and the search for a million year ice core. In 2019-20 both nations progressed projects in search of an ice core with a million-year climate archive – France by finalising site selection



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**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

and setting up a drill camp near Concordia in conjunction with European consortium colleagues; Australia by working on our drill development, general planning and preparation of traverse equipment. These two coring projects, one led by Australia and the other by a European consortium, are highly collaborative and part of the cooperation within the International Partnerships in Ice Core Sciences (IPICS). IPICS, a 24 nation ice core advisory body, has identified the need for replicated records from such a core. France and Australia are also cooperating closely on ice core drill design. In the 2019-20 Antarctic season scientists from both nations undertook cooperative glaciological work on an Antarctic traverse from Concordia station towards the South Pole.

### **3. Options for enhancing strategic cooperation, including in the Indo-Pacific region and through multilateral fora.**

Refer to earlier advice under 2. regarding the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (QUAD) in the Pacific. Also refer to earlier advice under 2 regarding opportunities for further strategic cooperation in key ATS fora such as the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources (CCAMLR).

### **4. Australian engagement with intergovernmental organisations headquartered in France including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).**

The department leads on Australia's engagement in multilateral and regional forums with which France is a member. Australia and France are members of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Australia also highly values the contribution of those agencies that are based in France, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Organisation of Wine and Vine (OIV), the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) and the World Water Council (WWC).

Australia is a signatory to a number of intergovernmental agreements that have organisations based in France including the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) including the World Heritage Convention, which sits under the umbrella of UNESCO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Organisation of Wine and Vine (OIV), the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) and World Water Council (WWC).

The Department particularly values the OECD, UNESCO, OIE, OIV, SIOFA and WWC intergovernmental organisations located in France and looks forward to continuing to work with these organisations to progress Australia's agricultural, water and environment objectives. In particular, we could work more closely with France in the OECD in the Fisheries, Agriculture, Chemical and Environment Policy Committees including on issues such as providing sufficient and safe food for a growing and richer global



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**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

population; more efficiently allocating resources for agriculture, non-agriculture and ecosystems and adapting to climate change. In cooperation with France we could continue to strengthen the governance arrangements for SIOFA to ensure it becomes a fully functioning regional fisheries management organisation that delivers on the objectives of its constituent treaty.

*Background*

Australia and France are both members of the OECD headquartered in Paris. There are four Committees that the department primarily participates in (along with their subordinate committees where appropriate): Agriculture Committee, Fisheries Committee; Environment Policy Committee and the Chemicals Committee.

The OECD's work on agriculture and fisheries policy is advanced primarily through the Committee for Agriculture (CoAg), its technical working parties and the Committee for Fisheries (CoFi). Australia's strategic priorities for agriculture and fisheries engagement in the OECD are to gain domestic policy advice and influence the global agenda on agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food and sustainable resource management (i.e. by helping to demonstrate the benefits of trade liberalisation).

While Australia and France have quite different policy approaches to agriculture domestically, both strongly support the work of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate, which provides economic analysis and advice to governments on policies for innovation, productivity, trade and sustainability in the agriculture and the wider agri-food sector as well as long term scenarios for the future of agriculture. Key policy challenges of shared interest include:

1. Providing sufficient and safe food for a growing and richer global population
2. More efficiently allocating resources for agriculture, non-agriculture and ecosystems usages – are the right policies in place to enhance productivity and support sustainability goals in the wide range of circumstances in OECD countries?
3. Adapting to climate change – what's the role of domestic and international actions with the global public goods issue.

The department has an Agriculture Minister Counsellor and a locally engaged Agriculture Advisor that represent Australia at OECD agriculture forums and have established networks within the OECD. These staff, with support from capital, pursue the above priorities and influence the OECD's work and policy orientations to advance Australia's national interests.

We have a strong relationship with France in the OECD Environment Policy Committee (EPOC) which oversees and implements the OECD's Environment Programme. Through participation in EPOC meetings, Australia and other OECD members share expertise in environmental management, and benefit from the OECD's broader work in policy analysis and standard-setting.

An additional area of cooperation with France is through the OECD's Chemicals Committee and the Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology. The current President of the Joint Meeting is an officer from the department. The Joint Meeting oversees the OECD Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) Programme, which sets global standards in risk assessment methodologies and tools, and





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**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

determines many international approaches including information sharing and regulation. It is a very valuable forum for informing Australia's approach to chemicals management.

Both France and Australia have both been supportive of nominations for our countries' candidates to chair technical working groups of the OECD.

As a founding member of the World Heritage Convention (administered by UNESCO), Australia has played an active role in strengthening the integrity of the Convention and its processes through a range of successful policy developments and operational reforms. Australia has previously served on the Committee four times with its current term ending in 2021. Australia's priorities during our current term are nomination and state of conservation reform and updating the *World Heritage Climate Change Policy*.

The OIE is an inter-governmental organisation recognised by the World Trade Organization as the international reference organisation for standards on animal health issues, including zoonoses. It currently has 182 member countries including Australia and France. The Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp, is Australia's Delegate to the OIE and current elected President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates. The Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (OCVO) coordinates Australia's OIE work and draws on the expertise of other Australian government departments and agencies, industry bodies and other experts on public health, animal health and animal welfare issues. Membership in the organisation allows Australia to engage with France and other member countries to influence the global animal health agenda and achieve positive global outcomes on these issues.

Australia supported the establishment of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) Secretariat in La Reunion, France in 2015. SIOFA is an important regional fisheries management organisation to Australia, as it manages valuable shared resources including toothfish populations that straddle Australia's exclusive economic zone surrounding Heard Island and McDonald Islands, and the adjacent high seas.

Australia continues to play an active role in ensuring the proper functioning of SIOFA, including by chairing its Scientific Committee from 2015-2020 and as interim co-chairperson in 2019 and 2020. Australia also contributed significantly to establishing SIOFA's foundation texts in close cooperation with France in respect of its overseas territories and in its role as host State.

While Australia has no direct bilateral relationship with France over water, the department is a member of the World Water Council (WWC). The WWC is an international non-profit organisation based in Marseille that aims to address increasing concerns about world water issues through cooperation and discussions between intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies, government ministries and agencies, local and regional authorities, and private/public/academic groups and businesses.

The WWC organises the World Water Forum (WWF), the foremost international event in the water sector. The WWF is a non-binding, non-UN process, multi-stakeholder platform, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss critical water issues, develop proposals to address these issues and secure political commitment to implement the resulting proposals. The WWF is held every three



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**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

years and Australia has actively participated and sent delegations to the previous six forums, including Marseilles in 2012, since 2003.

The department is a member of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) which is based in Paris. The OIV is an inter-governmental organisation which deals with technical aspects of the wine industry (grape growing, winemaking and consumers). It is not an international standard setting body – but makes recommendations as to the parameters for standards. Australia has been involved in the OIV and its predecessor organisation since 1978.

##### **5. Opportunities to build on shared historical and cultural values and promote tourism, with specific reference to Commonwealth War Graves, cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties.**

In terms of Australia's relationship with France in heritage issues there are many other possible shared Australian-French underwater cultural heritage projects that exist in Australian waters including searching for potential survivors from La Perouse's voyage, who are believed shipwrecked on the Great Barrier Reef, in the northeast Torres Strait. However, Australia's maritime and underwater cultural heritage relations with France extend to sites in French waters. Throughout WWI and WWII, Australian merchantman and five sovereign vessels acting as troop ships were sunk in the English Channel near France. From WWI alone, these include the HMAT A19 *Afric*, HMAT A55 *Kyarra*, HMAT A69 *Warilda*, HMAT A70 *Ballarat*, SS *Berrima* and SS *Makarini*. No research has been done to locate or document the condition of these sites.

As France has already ratified the UNESCO 2001 *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage* there is also potential to collaborate with France and researchers in New Caledonia to undertake capacity building training in maritime archaeology in the Pacific Region supporting countries such as Vanuatu and its blue economy around shipwreck dive tourism. Further, other Australian shared underwater cultural heritage exists in French Territorial waters in the Pacific. This includes vessels such as the ex-convict ship *Lady Rowena*, the second Australian vessel to land in Japan, which was condemned in Tahiti.

##### *Background*

Maritime and underwater cultural heritage have a unique place in Australia's relations with France. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and into the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, six major French expeditions came to Australia by sea. These expeditions, focussed largely on sciences including anthropology, botany, geology, zoology, geography and astronomy, produced unique collections of specimens and excellent early observations of some Indigenous Australians and their language. The first French expedition to Australia arrived just days after the landing of the First Fleet in January 1788. Names such as La Perouse, Baudin, d'Entrecasteaux, D'Urville and Freycinet are now inextricably associated to places around Australia and events of cultural and scientific significance. In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century the French sovereign vessel *Duroc* (1856), built in the same shipyards that are currently building Australia's new submarine fleet, was wrecked at Mellish Reef in the Coral Sea and is a site of shared heritage with Australia and with unexplored archaeological potential



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## **6. Any related matters.**

The Government of France will host the next International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (the Congress) in Marseille in January 2021. France is seeking ambitious outcomes from the Congress on a range of conservation issues. Australia intends to participate in the Congress and will work with the France to ensure successful outcomes.

The Government of France have proposed a new Alliance for the Conservation of Rainforests. Australia is broadly supportive of the Alliance, particularly its potential synergies with the Asia-Pacific Rainforest Partnership. We will continue to work with the Government of France and our likeminded countries on preserving our tropical forests.

### *Background*

The IUCN Congress is a high-profile event that brings together thousands of delegates to discuss environmental challenges and propose solutions. The aim of the Congress is to influence conservation policy at all levels, help set the international conservation agenda, and support progress on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).