

12<sup>th</sup> April 2024

## Submission to the Inquiry into Australia's National Interest in Antarctica.

I believe there are major interests for Australia in Antarctica and that Australia has a significant responsibility and role in protecting the territory as a natural heritage of the world.

As a member of the public, it is a source of pride to know that Australia is one of the 12 original signatories to the Antarctica Treaty (1959). And that Australia is closely involved in Antarctica, particularly with the Australian Antarctic Territory. With our position as a proximate country to Antarctica, Australia has a significant responsibility to uphold the interests of Antarctica and protect it from environmental, economic, or other threats. It is imperative that we conserve and protect the natural heritages of the world, including Antarctica, from both localised issues (such as overfishing or human development) and global issues (such as climate change).

There is much that can be gained from Antarctica. This includes both climate science research and the role that Antarctica has (as a white landmass) in reflecting heat from the Earth (helping to lessen temperature rises). However, that also relies on protecting it. Indeed, reducing ice cover (on average) year to year could be one of the tipping points that cause worsening climate change, with less ice surface meaning less heat is being reflected. There are also economic benefits, such as tourism or fishing, which should be done at sustainable levels but are more things that can be appreciated about Antarctica provides.

There is an intrinsic reason to value and conserve Antarctica, including for the immense biodiversity in the region. There is also a public interest in Antarctica as a landscape and for the unique creatures that inhabit it. To put it simply, it is a beautiful landscape that we have the privilege of seeing in our world. But it would be an immense tragedy for the biodiversity and landscapes of Antarctica to be

lost or irreparably harmed. We should ensure that Antarctica is protected and that current and future generations can engage with it, not merely in archives of *Happy Feet* or David Attenborough documentaries. The nature of the Antarctic System is that no one country really owns Antarctica, but rather are custodians of it. What we have now we should dedicate our efforts to conserve and pass on.

Overall, I believe it is important to support scientific research endeavours in Antarctica to learn more about the region (and what we can learn for other areas such as climate science). I also believe it is critical to be a responsible conservator of the region and to advocate that other countries do the same. Arguably, Australian interests in Antarctica would call for much more funding to scientific research and conservation efforts.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Benjamin Cronshaw.