

**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:** IQ23-000291  
**Hearing Date:** 05 October 2023  
**Division/Agency:** Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)  
**Topic:** AAD budgets  
**Question Date:** 23 October 2023  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Whish-Wilson asked:**

Context: Consistent evidence was provided to the inquiry from current and previous AAD staff that funding towards and logistical support for science programs, especially Antarctic access and field work, is by its nature 'discretionary' because it's not set at budget time or ring fenced in the budget, and proposed science programs are therefore more likely to be cancelled, delayed, deferred or rejected than changes to fixed overheads, or other operating expenses when the division has to 'live within its means' (find savings, trim expenses etc).

1. Does the AAD internally break down its budgets into overhead costs (fixed and variable) and operating expenses?
2. How is providing access and support for scientists or Antarctic science field work/ programs accounted for in any AAD budget (if at all)? Does it have a separate line item?
3. Can the division provide historic estimates for expenses or variable overhead costs allocated for scientists or science programs accessing Antarctica (for AAD science branch staff and other scientists)
4. If so, please provide for the last 5 AAD budgets?
5. If so, please list this metric as a % of that year's total budget.
6. Has consideration been given by previous governments, or has advice been provided by the department to the government, or by the division to the department, that a funding pool should be set aside and 'ring fenced' or "quarantined" specifically for AAD Antarctic science branch programs?
7. Is the delivery of Antarctic Science programs the number one priority for the AAD, and/or for this government?
8. If so, how does the AAD prioritise the delivery of Antarctica Science programs over other priorities (eg policy development, geopolitical interests, infrastructure spending etc)?

**Answer:**

1. The AAD undertakes a budget review process each year with all departmental operating expenses (including overhead costs) broken down for internal budget purposes.
2. The AAD approves the science field work and programs to be undertaken and the support required as part of the department's annual budget process. The costs associated with significant programs/field work are clearly identified in separate line items within the budget.
3. Five Budgets for direct expenses allocated for scientists or science programs accessing Antarctica is below. These projects are also supported by significant logistics and station support, including leveraging the Nuyina ship days, aviation, station leadership, medical support, training, food and utilities.

	2023-24 \$m	2022-23 \$m	2021-22 \$m	2020-21 \$m	2019-20 \$m
Internal Budgets - Science Access and Support	30.8	28.9	24.6	18.0	15.0
% of AAD Budget	17%	13%	11%	10%	11%

6. In accordance with the Australian Antarctic Science Council's terms of reference, and at the request of the Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, the Council has given consideration to options for future funding models for Antarctic science. This advice has been provided to the Committee.

7. The articulation of science as a priority for the AAD is a commitment made in the 2022 update to the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan. Science being at the forefront of the AAD was also included as a key principle informing the division's restructure in July 2023.

8. The delivery of Antarctic Science is achieved through AAD prioritisation led by the Chief Scientist and the annual season planning process, which is informed by guidance documents that prioritise activities according to the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan.