

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: IQ23-000307
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: 10 science projects not supported
Hansard Page: 2
Question Date: 20 November 2023
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

CHAIR: Thank you. In answers to questions on notice to Senator Bilyk you said that, in 2022-23, 19 science projects were supported and that 10 science projects were unable to be supported. Can you tell us which were the 10 projects that were unable to be supported.

Ms Campbell: I don't have that detail here. Do you, Professor Webster?

Prof. Webster: No, sorry.

Ms Campbell: We're happy to take that on notice, as we don't have that detail here today.

CHAIR: Could you take that on notice and tell us what the decision-making process was as to why those ones in particular weren't supported.

Ms Campbell: Yes, we'll do our best.

Answer:

During 2022-2023 season planning, the approved season plan noted 10 science projects that requested operational support (either through the provisioning of tickets to travel south, or through station-based assistance), that were not able to be supported. These included:

Project Number	Title
4496	Airborne sea-ice thickness: Synoptic spring-time assessment
4511	ICECAP – EAGLE (International Collaborative Exploration of the Cryosphere by Airborne Profiling-East Antarctic Grounding Line Experiment)
4520	Assessment of waste and contamination in marine and terrestrial ecosystems with recommendations for environmental management at Mawson station
4546	Integrated observations of Antarctic land-fast sea ice physical and biological processes during the spring transition
4574	State Estimate of East Antarctic Ice Shelves
4592	Terrestrial microbial biodiversity in the Vestfold Hills: structure, drivers, and protection
4619	Macquarie Island Wildlife Monitoring Program: strategic monitoring for applied conservation and management
4622	A Cleaner Antarctica (Mawson assessment in conjunction with AAS4520)
4633	BEAUT - Biodiversity of East Antarctica: Underwater and Terrestrial
4644	Antarctic Nearshore and Terrestrial Observing System - East Antarctica (East-ANTOS)

These 10 projects were not able to be supported during the 2022-23 season for a range of complex reasons. In each case, and as is standard practice for Australian Antarctic Science Projects, options to defer activities were discussed with the project Chief Investigators and then included in future season planning where appropriate. For example, projects 4511 and 4619, which were not supported in 2022-23, are being supported in the 2023-24 season. Project 4622 A Cleaner Antarctica made progress on other activities, including preliminary site

assessments from historical data. Projects 4633 and 4644 were nominally included but were to be realigned with the decadal plan for science and East Antarctic Monitoring Program once these have been finalised.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000309
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Funding for Wharf upgrade
Hansard Page: 11
Question Date: 16 November 2023
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Duniam asked:

Senator DUNIAM: Just on notice: some reflections were made by the illustrious CEO of TasPorts about the lack of wisdom and intelligence existing in the AAD around not having secured funding for a wharf upgrade.

Maybe, on notice, you might just consider whether sorting all that out was actually part of your brief or not. We might make sure that you see a copy of what was said, because I'm not sure if you were on before or after, or whether we asked you about it. But I think you'll get—

Ms Campbell: I've read the Hansard.

Senator DUNIAM: Yes. I think a right of reply is warranted, so please provide one on notice.

Answer:

Upgrades to Hobart's Antarctic Macquarie Wharf facilities and the surrounding port infrastructure are critical to the operation of Australia's icebreaker RSV *Nuyina* and the Australian Antarctic Program. The Australian Government's commitment of \$240 million for urban redevelopment at the Macquarie Point Precinct in Hobart, announced in April 2023, is conditional upon the Tasmanian Government upgrading Macquarie Wharf 6 on commercial terms acceptable to the Australian Government.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water continues to engage with the Tasmanian Government and TasPorts to ensure the working port meets the current and future needs of the Australian Antarctic Program.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000314
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Staff exit surveys
Hansard Page: 8
Question Date: 16 November 2023
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Bilyk asked:

Senator BILYK: Just as a follow-on: do you do exit surveys when people leave?

Ms Campbell: We offer exit surveys and staff can choose to see those. Now that you say that, I saw an exit survey, I think it was last week, from someone who is not in Science Branch. So we do occasionally have exit surveys if people choose to opt in.

Senator BILYK: Are they always offered?

Ms Campbell: My understanding is that they are always offered.

Senator BILYK: Do you agree with that, Professor Webster?

Prof. Webster: I actually am uncertain. I believe it's part of the exit process that happens online, where they can select if they would like an exit survey.

Senator BILYK: I'm saying: are they always offered? Someone taking it up is part of a different line of questioning. Is it offered to everybody?

Ms Campbell: Professor Webster is saying that, to her understanding, it's part of our formal exit offboarding system. So it is always offered, but we can confirm that on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has a voluntary exit survey included in the Staff Exit Declaration form, which is triggered through the offboarding process available to all employees.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000315
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Macquarie Island Modernisation Project
Hansard Page: 5
Question Date: 16 November 2023
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Duniam asked:

Senator DUNIAM: ... I touched on the Macquarie Island Modernisation Project right at the end when we were down in Hobart; by what date will all the remaining funds be expended on that project? What date are you hoping or planning for, at least?

Ms Campbell: I'll have to take that question on notice. We are doing some infrastructure work this year. I don't expect that will expend the full amount this year, but we are certainly looking at delivering a lot—as much as we can—every year. I'll have to take the detail of the time frame for the remaining funds on notice.

Senator DUNIAM: That's absolutely fine, I understand.

Answer:

30 June 2027.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000316
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Projects and programs funding breakdown
Hansard Page: 6
Question Date: 16 November 2023
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Duniam asked:

Senator DUNIAM: ... I might just place these ones on notice, then. Then I will be done. Can you provide a list of the projects and programs involving the AAD that were funded by the Commonwealth in 2021-22 but are no longer funded by the Commonwealth in 2022-23? Which continuing projects and programs involving the AAD have had their funding reduced during 2022-23, and by how much? Can you provide a list of projects and programs involving the AAD that were funded by the Commonwealth in 2022-23 but are no longer being funded by the Commonwealth in the next financial year, 2023-24? Which continuing projects and programs involving the AAD have had their funding reduced in 2023-24, and by how much? And are you able to provide a list of projects and programs involving the AAD that were funded by the Commonwealth for the first time in 2022-23 and the total expenditure on each of them—that is, new programs or projects—and a list of projects and programs involving the AAD that are being funded by the Commonwealth for the first time in 2023-24 and the total expenditure of each of them? On notice would be delightful. That's all I have.

Prof. Webster: Senator, can I just seek clarification: when you talk about ongoing projects and the resourcing that was allocated in 2022-23 as a reduction or an increase, are you asking relative to 2021-22?

Senator DUNIAM: Yes.

Prof. Webster: We have a large number of, for instance, ongoing monitoring programs that change from year to year and maintain for up to a decade.

Senator DUNIAM: Yes. I suppose in answering that question, if those situations arise, it would be good if there's a way of explaining that a variation is as a result of something operational as opposed to an administrative decision to cease a program. I fully expect that there would be funding spikes and troughs and that sort of thing. However you can comply with that request, I'd be delighted to receive any information. Thank you.

Answer:

Broadly, the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) supports a range of Australian Antarctic Science projects through the provision of capital, operational and logistics support. Projects approved for inclusion in the Australian Antarctic Program may receive logistics support and/or access to Antarctic data or samples that is not reliant on a project funding commitment. These projects are approved based on fixed support periods (up to 10 years).

More specifically, no Antarctic science projects funded in 2021-22 have had their funding ceased. Antarctic science projects within the AAD have not had their direct funding reduced.

The AAD approved 21 science projects for inclusion in the Australian Antarctic Program in its most recent application round (Dec. 21 - Feb. 2022). Since the opening of that round, 18 science projects from previous rounds have been completed.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ23-000320
Hearing Date: 16 November 2023
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Cleaner Antarctica Program
Question Date: 21 November 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Duniam asked:

1. (a) Following Professor Webster's evidence at the hearing of 16 November: please list the annual dollar amounts already expended on the Cleaner Antarctica Program, and the new annual allocations, for 2023-24 and each future financial year, to that program.
- (b) What was the total amount of funding that was first allocated to the Cleaner Antarctica Program – and, at that time, what were the annual dollar allocations for each financial year concerned?

Answer:

- a) The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) has spent \$623,053 in operating costs, and a further \$235,000 in capital for the Cleaner Antarctica Program. The funds were spent in the 2022-23 financial year.

The new annual allocation is finalised for 2023-24 only, the outyear allocations are not yet available.

The 2023-24 allocation is \$733,184 for operating, and \$236,694 for capital.

- b) Funding in relation to the Cleaner Antarctica Program was included in the 2022-2023 October budget as part of the broader Outcome 3 funding.

The quantum earmarked was in the order of an additional \$10 million over five years, with the allocation to be determined on an annual basis by the AAD.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding

Question No: IQ23-000321

Hearing Date: 16 November 2023

Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division

Topic: Cross-government work/programs

Question Date: 21 November 2023

Question Type: Written

Senator Duniam asked:

Has any AAD work or activity that was previously undertaken with any other government departments and agencies been stopped, or reduced in any way, during 2022-23 and 2023-24 – and, if so, please indicate the specific changes and financial impact in each case.

Answer:

The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) supports, and is supported by, other Commonwealth government agencies in the delivery of the Australian Antarctic Program. Work and activity with other government departments changes from year to year, and in recent years this has included reduced seasons for COVID-19 management.