



31 August 2023

Australian Marine Conservation Society and Humane Society International Australia Submission to the Senate inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) is Australia's peak marine conservation organisation and Australia's leading national charity dedicated solely to protecting our precious ocean wildlife – a community of ocean lovers across the nation working for healthy seas. Representing over 300,000 people from all around the country, we are the guardians and voice for marine life. We work to protect our oceans and coastal environments for the benefit of all marine life, and current and future generations.

Humane Society International (HSI) is the world's largest conservation and animal welfare organisation. HSI Australia has more than 25 years' experience in Australia working to achieve an ecologically sustainable and humane world for animals, with a strong focus on marine wildlife that make their home in the Southern Ocean.

AMCS and HSI welcome the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications inquiry into funding of the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). It is our understanding that funding of the AAD is proposed to be cut by an estimated \$25 million, equivalent to roughly 16% of its operating budget. As evidence-based campaign organisations that work with the Australian community on protecting and restoring our coasts and oceans, and the wildlife that live there, we believe continued and strong funding of the AAD and the work it does to be critical.

Australian scientific research is vital in understanding the impact of threats on Australia's natural environment, and informing the development of evidence-based policy to ensure its protection. The Federal Government invested an additional \$163.4 million over four years in the May 2023 Budget in the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS). Minister Plibersek noted the calibre of Australian marine scientists and the need to invest in ocean science in making the funding announcement.¹

The AAD is renowned globally for the world class research that it undertakes to understand our changing climate, and its impacts on habitats and species such as globally important cetaceans, albatross, and other marine biodiversity. This research, and the staff managing the work, feeds into multiple national and international agreements and conventions to help understand the pressures facing the Antarctic

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<https://minister.dccew.gov.au/plibersek/media-releases/joint-media-release-labor-government-saves-australian-marine-science-and-north-queensland-jobs>

and Southern Ocean and help inform our measures to protect this most precious environment.

Now more than ever, as we face the challenges of both a climate and extinction crisis, we believe the Government should be providing financial security to enable the AAD to continue investing in this research with confidence. Cutting budgets responsible for scientific research into species and the Antarctic ecosystem, will have significant impacts to long running programs

Recommendation

We recommend the Government reinstate AAD's funding to ensure their vital work and projects can continue at current levels.

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Australian Marine Conservation Society, www.marineconservation.org.au, PO Box 5815, West End QLD 4101 **p** 07 3846 6777 **f** 07 3846 6788 **e** amcs@amcs.org.au

Humane Society International Australia www.hsi.org.au PO Box 439 Avalon, NSW 2107 **p** 02 9973 1728