



Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications:

### Australian Antarctic Division Funding

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications inquiry into the funding of the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD).

#### The Tasmanian Polar Network

The Tasmanian Polar Network was incorporated in 1999 and has more than 70 members drawn from all areas of the Tasmanian Antarctic community, including private businesses, educational institutions, research bodies, and government agencies.<sup>1</sup>

TPN members provide a niche and wide range of specialised goods and services to all organisations operating in the Southern Ocean and in Antarctica. This includes the Australian Antarctic Program and other National Antarctic Programmes.

The TPN's vision is for Tasmania to be the world's leading hub of excellence for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean sector.

The TPN's mission is to strengthen, promote and grow Tasmania's business, education, training, and research expertise in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean sector.

#### Terms of Reference

The Tasmanian Polar Network would like to highlight the following regarding the Terms of Reference in the inquiry into funding of the AAD:

*(b) the direct and indirect impacts of cuts to public funding of Australia's Antarctic activities, including on full-time, part-time and contract AAD jobs;*

The Australian Antarctic Division and its related Australian Antarctic Program are a major source of funding and revenue for the Tasmanian community, and many of our members supply goods and services to the AAD and AAP. This includes the provision of goods, research equipment services, employment, and technical expertise. An economic analysis undertaken in 2021 states that Tasmania's Antarctic and Southern Ocean sector contributes almost \$159 million annually to the Tasmanian economy and supports 947 FTE.<sup>2</sup> Noting that there may be a reduction in budget, the Tasmanian Polar Network is concerned that this will impact providers of goods and services within the sector, and, as noted below, will impact the reputation and appeal of Hobart as an Antarctic Gateway city.

*(d) the internal compilation of a list of at least 56 existing projects, programs and research activities that could be cut and/or terminated;*

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<sup>1</sup> Tasmanian Polar Network (link [here](#))

<sup>2</sup> Wells Economic Analysis Report into the Contribution of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Sector to the Tasmanian Economy 2019-20 (link [here](#)).

Each project, program, voyage, and expedition allows Tasmanian businesses to deliver and showcase world-class goods and services to the Antarctic program. Any reduction in scope will have a flow-on effect on both economic benefit but also result in lost opportunities to bolster our Antarctic and Southern Ocean workshop, whether it be apprentices working towards specialised skills in technical roles, postdoctoral researchers just beginning their scientific careers, and marine crews and provedores.

Companies with Antarctic specialisations could see the risk of engaging with the Australian Antarctic Program as too high and could re-focus their businesses on more stable areas, which will diminish the development of skills.

*(f) the consequences of funding cuts to Australia's Antarctic program for our country's geopolitical and strategic international interests;*

The Tasmanian Polar Network is concerned that the narrative around these cuts will diminish Hobart's place as a prominent Antarctic Gateway. Numerous National Antarctic Programmes have passed through Hobart on their way to East Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. These nations have included: France, Italy, the United States, China, and Germany. They provide economic stimulus and allow researchers, technical staff, and the broader public to benefit from such expertise visiting our region.

*(g) complications that the proposed \$25 million worth of cuts will cause for the full delivery of the Australian Antarctic Science Strategic Plan, the Australian Antarctic Strategy, the 20-year Action Plan, and the extra \$804.4 million Antarctic funding package delivered by the Morrison Government in early 2022;*

The Tasmanian Polar Network is concerned that reputational damage stemming from budget decisions will impact the numbers of businesses (from small to large), students, early career scientists, professional and technical staff, and world-class scientists who would otherwise choose to relocate to Tasmania's Antarctic and related institutions. Any fall in the reputation of Hobart as a gateway to Antarctica and as a hub for specialised skills related to the region will likely impact the delivery of the Australian Antarctic Strategy and the Australian Antarctic Decadal Science Plan (which is currently being developed).

Tasmanian Polar Network thanks the Senate Committee for allowing the Network to provide this information to ensure that Hobart and Tasmania remain a prominent and exceptional hub for Antarctic and Southern Ocean expertise, culture, economic benefit, and critical science.

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