



---

**Response to Joint Standing Committee on the  
National Capital and External Territories**

**INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN  
ANTARCTIC TERRITORY**

---

January 2004

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia's Antarctic and Southern Ocean activities have important political, economic, scientific and social benefits for Australia and for Tasmania. Realisation of these benefits requires adequate funding.

The provision of adequate funding for the following activities is a current priority:

1. The full implementation of the Australian Antarctic Airlink between Hobart and Casey Station in East Antarctica.
2. The continuation of the provision by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) of logistic support for activities on Macquarie Island.

### TASMANIA'S ROLE AS THE PREMIER ANTARCTIC GATEWAY

Tasmania is proud of its active role in supporting Australian interests in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean and is keen to pursue and develop this strategically important partnership.

The Tasmanian State Government has a strong focus on the Antarctic and Southern Ocean and promotes Hobart as a cost effective, convenient location that is also a strategically important base for Antarctic and sub-Antarctic programs. Hobart offers highly accessible information, experiences and material for students, visitors and researchers.

Tasmania is the only State to offer a dedicated office of Antarctic affairs, (Antarctic Tasmania), which is guided by a formal Government policy on the region titled, *Tasmania's Antarctic, sub-Antarctic and Southern Ocean Policy Framework*. Antarctic Tasmania works actively to support Antarctic institutions through initiatives ranging from conference incentive programs, to an annual Antarctic Tasmania Midwinter Festival (ATMF). In 2003, over 35,000 members of the general public participated in the Festival.

The University of Tasmania has adopted the Antarctic as a key university theme. The University is also in the process of establishing an Antarctic undergraduate degree. These initiatives will build upon the high profile efforts of postgraduate courses offered by the Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies (IASOS).

Businesses serving the Antarctic and Southern Ocean community are a key industry sector for Tasmania. This sector has grown principally because Hobart, as one of five international Antarctic gateways, provides the hub of Australia's Antarctic Program. While four other nations provide departure points to the Southern Ocean region, Hobart is unique in its ability to offer a combination of the following advantages:

- Hobart has an unparalleled tradition of supporting Antarctic endeavours, with Tasmania acting as a major staging post for Antarctic expeditions for over 200 years.

- The city is an international centre of excellence for Antarctic and temperate marine science. For example, Tasmania hosts 65% of Australia's Antarctic scientists in organisations including the AAD, CSIRO Division of Marine Research, the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC) and the Bureau of Meteorology's (BoM's) Antarctic Forecasting Division.
- Hobart has a thriving local Antarctic community with almost 800 people working on Antarctic issues, research and technology. These people are supported by a Tasmanian Antarctic focused industry supplying almost \$AUD50 million worth of Antarctic goods and services each year.
- Tasmania has a long tradition of supporting key international Antarctic nations and operators. For example, Tasmania has hosted the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) Commission for 22 years and will support the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) until at least 2009. Hobart is also a home port for the French Antarctic Program.

This unique set of attributes offered by Tasmania makes this State an ideal choice for Antarctic endeavours. Consequently, the Tasmanian Government is working actively towards encouraging new nations to the State in an effort to make them consider Hobart as their home base for accessing the Antarctic and Southern Ocean. This will reinforce Australia's position as a major player in Antarctic affairs.

### **COOPERATIVE EFFORTS TO ADVANCE THE ANTARCTIC SECTOR IN TASMANIA**

The Tasmanian Government in partnership with principal agencies and industry actively supports cooperative efforts to advance the Antarctic sector in Tasmania, as illustrated by the following examples:

- The CCAMLR Commission is a major international Antarctic fisheries organisation that is based in Hobart. This Commission was established in Hobart in 1982, and the Australian Government has an arrangement with the CCAMLR Commission to provide suitable accommodation for the Secretariat in Hobart. In a supporting role, the Tasmanian and Australian Governments share the CCAMLR Commission's accommodation rental costs.
- COMNAP is another major international Antarctic organisation with its Secretariat based in Hobart. This Secretariat is located within Antarctic Tasmania's office accommodation and it has been based in Hobart since 1997. The contract for the COMNAP Secretariat was recently awarded to Hobart for a second term, which will now extend to 2009. The Tasmanian Government, through Antarctic Tasmania, actively coordinated the proposal to extend the residency of the COMNAP Secretariat in Hobart. Hosting this prestigious Secretariat in Hobart builds on Tasmania's reputation as an important Antarctic Gateway for members of the national and international Antarctic community.

- The private sector, and State and Australian Government agencies actively support and participate in the ATMF. This annual Festival promotes Australia's prominent role in Antarctic science and logistical activities, and Tasmania's historical and contemporary connections to the Antarctic, sub-Antarctic and Southern Ocean.
- In December 2002, with the strong support of the Tasmanian Government, the Australian Government announced that the newly named Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC) had secured a new, seven-year program grant (\$AUD27 million). The bidding process was highly competitive, with over 40 other potential CRCs also in the funding race. The new ACE CRC commenced on 1 July 2003 and it is expected to employ up to 65 research staff. The State will be contributing up to \$500,000 in in-kind support to the Centre over the next three years. The Tasmanian Government considers this to have been a strategically important decision as the focus of resources and effort in these key areas of research will contribute greatly to Australia's interests in the region.
- The Tasmanian Government promotes the State to other nations in an effort to attract international organisations to base their secretariats or operations out of Hobart. For example, the Tasmanian Government is currently supporting Australia's bid to host the Secretariat of the international treaty, the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) in Hobart. This Agreement was concluded in 2001 under the Convention on Migratory Species or Bonn Convention. With the recent attainment of a fifth signatory to the Agreement, it will come into force in January 2004.
- In order to service the needs of this community, and other international operators, the Government supports the Tasmanian Polar Network (TPN). This peak Antarctic industry organisation provides a unique link between government and industry, enabling them to work together to promote Tasmania's Antarctic capabilities. The Tasmanian Government will continue to provide financial and secretariat support to assist the TPN in its important business. Most recently, the TPN has been heavily involved in promoting Hobart as a premier Antarctic Gateway and the preferred departure point for the Australian Antarctic Airlink.
- The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG) is an integral part of the national and international research program into sub-Antarctic flora and proposes to further develop all of its sub-Antarctic facilities which will enable the program to encompass the flora of all the circumpolar sub-Antarctic islands and nearby Oceanic islands. This program will place the RTBG as a world authority in the cultivation, display and research of sub-Antarctic flora available for collaborative research programs for Australian and international scientists.
- The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service manages and protects sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island Nature Reserve and World Heritage Area on behalf of the State and Australian Government, respectively. A comprehensive draft management plan for Macquarie Island has been released for public consultation and departmental officers are in discussion with the Australian Government concerning the plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide a statutory policy

framework for the conservation and protection of the values of the reserve and management of human use of the reserve for research, tourism and educational purposes. The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) has been operating a research station in the reserve for over 50 years. This research station attracts international programs in geosciences, atmospheric physics, the effects of climate change and biology. The BoM monitors clean air and climate change, and the University of Tasmania has expressed a strong interest in developing a summer field station to support its proposed Antarctic science degree programs.

- Several international ecotourism companies operate commercial voyages to Macquarie Island, the Ross Sea and the Australian Antarctic Territory, using Hobart as a staging and resupply base. Permission to visit Macquarie Island for educational tourism purposes is granted to operators, in part, due to the benefits to the State of Tasmania.

### **ADEQUACY OF FUNDING FOR AUSTRALIA'S ANTARCTIC PROGRAM: A TASMANIAN FOCUS**

The following examples illustrate the importance of Australia's Antarctic Program to Australia and Tasmania. Clearly there is a need to adequately fund these activities, if they are to attain their full potential in generating political, economic, scientific and social benefits.

#### *Vital Role of the Australian Antarctic Airlink*

- The full implementation of the Australian Antarctic Airlink between Hobart and Casey Station in East Antarctica is of critical importance. **Consequently, the Tasmanian Government supports additional funding to fully implement the proposed Airlink.** The Tasmanian Government considers that the capacity of the Airlink to draw members of other nations' Antarctic institutions to Hobart, and to expose these members to all that Tasmania has to offer both professionally and personally to the Antarctic community, is what is most exciting about the program. The Tasmanian Government puts forward the view that the planned introduction of the Airlink is likely to provide a powerful incentive to other National Antarctic Programs to consider using Hobart as the preferred Antarctic Gateway to the East Antarctic region. Tangible political, economic and social benefits are expected to potentially flow from 2005/2006 and ramp up until at least 2010.
- By way of example:
  - The French Antarctic Program, a comparatively small scale program, currently spend in excess of \$AUD2 million annually on goods and services sourced from Tasmania.
  - Russia, China, Italy, Japan and Estonia could reasonably be expected to contribute in the order of \$AUD8 million to the Tasmanian economy.
  - The United States Antarctic Program invests about \$US25 million (\$AUD 42 million) annually into the Christchurch economy. Approximately

3,500 people use Christchurch each year as a flight transit point on the way to the Antarctic, as part of this Program. The United States Antarctic Program also directly supports 40-55 local jobs and accounts for the equivalent of 34,000 nights in hotels each year.

- The benefits flowing from the full scale implementation of the Australian Antarctic Airlink, enabling expansion of Hobart's role as an Antarctic Gateway by the year 2010, the value of Tasmanian Antarctic sector expenditure could approach \$AUD150 million annually. This is a substantial contribution to the Australian economy and is even more important to Tasmania's small regional economy.

#### *Other Examples Illustrating the Importance of Australia's Antarctic Program to Tasmania*

- Hobart offers the potential to assist with protection of the environment, particularly with regard to waste management and the clean up of Australian Antarctic bases, with waste and obsolete station material potentially passing through Hobart for disposal. This is also an important economic opportunity.
- Issues pertaining to compliance and enforcement provisions for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean will continue to attract much political and community attention. For example, the recent three-week chase over 4,000 nm of the illegal Patagonian toothfish fishing vessel, the Uruguayan flagged Viarsa 1, by an Australian Customs Service patrol boat, the Southern Supporter, resulted in a successful apprehension. The Viarsa 1 was sighted illegally fishing in the Australian Heard and McDonald Islands Fishing Zone and significant resources were required to undertake this apprehension to ensure the fishery was protected. Protection of Australia's commercial fisheries interests could potentially be further enhanced using Falcon aircraft as long-range fisheries surveillance aircraft to monitor illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean.
- Promotion and commercialisation is another significant area of Antarctic activity likely to result in significant benefits to Australia. For example, the Tasmanian Government contributes to the commercialisation of CRC research activities and is keen to explore future commercial opportunities arising out of the work of organisations such as CSIRO, the AAD and the BoM. The Tasmanian Government is of the view that additional target investment in this area will realise significant benefits for Australian business.
- The highest priority identified in the new management plan for Macquarie Island is the eradication of introduced species. Since the successful eradication of cats from the reserve was declared in 2002, rabbits, rats and mice now pose the main threat to the natural and other World Heritage values of the reserve, particularly for conservation of threatened species that rely on the reserve for breeding and nesting (albatross, petrels, etc). New Zealand has recently successfully eradicated these species on their sub-Antarctic Campbell Island, which is very similar to Macquarie Island in terms of size and terrain. Funding in the order of \$AUD4 million is required to conduct such a program at Macquarie Island in order to meet our obligations under the World Heritage

Convention and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). An eradication program is urgently required and should be undertaken within the next two years to prevent irreparable damage to the Island's ecosystem and its threatened species. The assistance of the AAD would be invaluable to such a program.

- However, the AAD is winding back its operations on Macquarie Island in order to fund research program priorities on the continent and at Heard Island. This loss of logistic support has major implications for the ongoing management and protection of Macquarie Island. **Funding to the AAD should be sufficient to encourage them to continue to provide logistic support for management, research and long term monitoring programs.** While the University of Tasmania is keen to operate a summer research and educational program at Macquarie Island and may operate its own transport to the reserve, this is likely to be some years away. The current Parks and Wildlife Service annual operating budget for Macquarie Island is \$180 000. An additional \$15 000 per person is required for return passage on tourist ships. Therefore, up to \$250 000 would be required each year by the PWS to adequately fund management, research and long term monitoring programs to meet the objectives of the EPBC Act, numerous international conventions and national recovery plans for threatened species in the reserve.
- In addressing the growing concerns of Antarctic Treaty Parties towards increasing tourism activities, Australia has a potential role in leading the provision of accredited training of Antarctic tour guides and operators by leveraging existing research and education expertise that already reside in Hobart-based institutions.
- The Australian Government, with assistance from the Tasmanian Government, currently has an opportunity to secure the ACAP Secretariat in Hobart (as stated, ACAP will come into force on 1 February 2004). Securing this Secretariat would enhance Australia's reputation for hosting international Antarctic organisations, and for being at the forefront on international Antarctic research and environmental management efforts. From a Tasmanian perspective the Secretariat would result in limited new employment but would certainly reinforce Australia's role in Antarctic affairs, attract conferences to Hobart and increase visitation to Australia.
- The Antarctic and Southern Ocean are extremely important components of the global climate system and have a particularly strong influence on the Australian and Southern Hemisphere climate. Scientific knowledge relating to the climate dynamics of the region is limited, with Australia making some of the most important international research contributions concerning its role in global climate change. The ACE CRC is probably now the only multidisciplinary team of scientists addressing Antarctic contributions to sea level rise and climate change. There is currently no alternative to Australia at least maintaining (ideally increasing) its research effort on climate change in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean simply because otherwise this research will cease, seriously compromising not only our potential to more accurately predict climate change in Australia, but also our ability to participate in, and gain access to, other relevant international climate research activities.