



1. SUBMISSION TO

THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES

Inquiry into the Adequacy of Funding for Australia's Antarctic Program

c/o Quinton Clements
Secretariat
Joint Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

2. JOINTLY SUBMITTED BY

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3. INTRODUCTION

This submission aims to address two areas of interest to the Committee in relation to advancing and protecting Australia's Antarctic interests:

- In light of the impending introduction of a permanent air link between Australia and our continental Antarctic Territory, that Albany is considered as an additional base of operation for flights departing from and arriving to Australia.
- That Albany is considered as a base of operation for undertaking increased sea and air surveillance of Australia's exclusive economic zone around Heard and McDonald Islands.

4. ALBANY – ANTARCTIC AIR LINK

Albany is located on the south coast of Western Australia and is the administrative and service centre for the Great Southern region. This city of 32,000 people is 410

kilometres south of Perth and is only four hours by road and less than one hour's flying time from Perth International Airport.

Albany has a strong link to the Antarctic/Southern Ocean culture dating back to the eighteenth century and is currently used by fishing vessels operating in the Southern Ocean.

4.1 Outstanding, centrally located aviation facilities

The City of Albany is a progressive and innovative municipality, which owns and operates the large regional aerodrome – the Harry Riggs Regional Airport.

The facilities at Albany are first class. A \$1 million upgrade of the airport terminal was recently completed and includes check in services, cafeteria, staffed hire car outlets and a modern comfortable building. An Instrument Landing System was commissioned on 1 January 2001 providing all weather landing access and a \$2.9 million upgrade of the airstrip was recently completed allowing Boeing 737 aircraft to use the facilities.

The airport is owned and operated by the City of Albany in accordance with Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority's airport regulations. It is located well away from residential areas and offers excellent ground support from an on-site management team. There is sufficient land available for the expansion of aviation facilities, which can be negotiated with aviation companies.

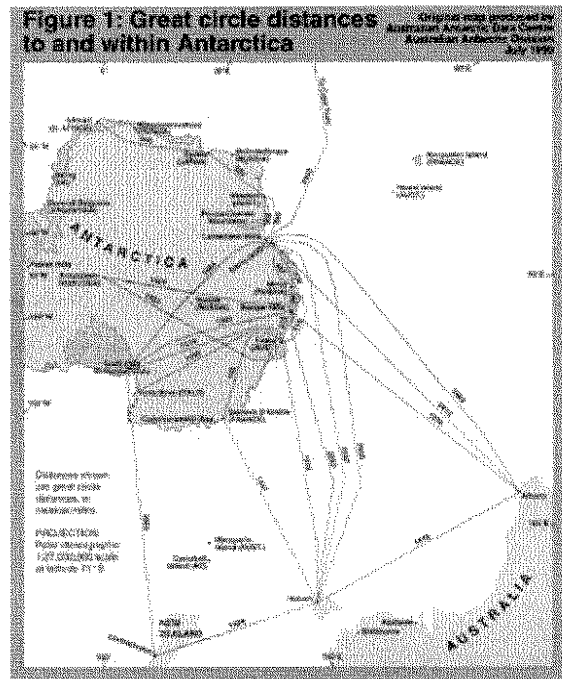
4.2 Close geographic proximity to the Antarctic

Albany is well placed geographically to provide direct air services to Casey, the base selected by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) for its intercontinental air transport destination. The attached map of Australia and the Antarctic shows Albany is closer to many of Antarctica's scientific research bases and a similar distance to Casey than is Hobart.

For economic and logistical reasons, there is merit in Albany being considered as an additional or supplementary location for supporting operations in Antarctica. Using both Albany and Hobart has scope to provide greater flexibility of access and is worthy of a more detailed analysis by the Federal Government.

4.3 Attractive environment

Albany is surrounded by pristine waterways and is a focus of



maritime recreation. Superb beaches, magnificent coastal inlets and tranquil river estuaries are natural playgrounds for swimming, sailing and fishing. The region's Mediterranean climate, with cooler summers and warmer winters that Perth makes it a year around tourist destination – in fact it is little wonder Albany won the prestigious 'Top Tourism Town Award' for Western Australia twice in the last decade.

4.4 Progressive community

Albany is a progressive and innovative regional community, which thrives on new challenges. Albany has pursued and attracted investment in a University of Western Australia regional campus, major retail stores, maritime facilities, tourism infrastructure and plantation timber infrastructure.

Albany's population is growing steadily (nearly 2% pa) as more people realise the lifestyle and employment opportunities available in Albany. Sustainable economic and population growth is forecast as new settlers are openly welcomed.

4.5 Modern community and industry infrastructure

The City of Albany services a large agricultural region and therefore has significant community infrastructure including the regional hospital, specialist medical services, commercial visitor accommodation, a range of dining and entertainment experiences and large retail and wholesale enterprises with significant supply capabilities.

Albany has outstanding port facilities with a new \$21 million berth recently constructed to service the plantation timber export trade. Albany is one of Western Australia's major export ports and has an efficient and productive workforce.

5. **ALBANY BASED SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS**

5.1 Fisheries protection

Albany's relatively close proximity to Australia's sub-Antarctic exclusive economic zone around Heard and McDonald Islands and related key fisheries makes it a strategic location for a base to run surveillance operations.

The living resources of the Antarctic region have been exploited for over 200 years, often with lasting effects on individual species and whole ecosystems. A number of species have become threatened by over-harvesting or illegal fishing. While fisheries in the Antarctic region today are focussed on Patagonian toothfish, icefish and krill, there is potential for new fisheries to emerge.

Australia is an active participant in the harvesting of these living resources, which is worth around \$30 million per year to the national economy. This

carries with it a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that the fisheries can be sustained indefinitely. Illegal fishing activity in these waters, recently highlighted by the three week sea chase of the Uruguayan trawler Viarsa, is a significant problem which Australia has the capacity to address more effectively.

Australia's Antarctic fishing area is considered to be 'the jewel in the crown' for toothfish poachers. It is estimated that some 3,000 tonnes of the fish are stolen from Australian waters each year. The practice drives down the annual quota of fish that can be caught legally from the fishery.

Albany has all of the capabilities to provide the level of support required for an increased Federal Government surveillance effort. A combined air and sea surveillance operation could be ideally based from Albany, given its excellent infrastructure and community attributes as detailed above in Section 4.

5.2 Potential for a private sector surveillance partner

Austral Fisheries, an arm of Kailas and France (a Western Australian fishing group), takes 70% of Australia's annual quota of Patagonian toothfish from the Australian fishing zone around Heard and McDonald Islands.

The company is currently considering the purchase of a DC6 aircraft to use as a surveillance aircraft to patrol the remote southern Australian fisheries, taking photographs of illegal vessels. It is proposed that the aircraft would be based at the Albany's Harry Riggs Regional Airport. Undertaking weekly patrols, the aircraft would be equipped with sophisticated radar equipment and a photographer would be available to record suspicious activity.

There may be scope for a joint public/private sector initiative in undertaking these air surveillance activities which is worthy of consideration by the Federal Government.

It is understood that the DC6 aircraft will require hanger space of approximately 1,600 m², which would need to be built at Albany's airport. Contributing financially to the capital cost of the hanger could be another area of opportunity for the Australian Government to make a positive contribution to the surveillance measures.

Utilisation of this proposed aviation operation for Antarctica passenger traffic should also be investigated further by the Australian Government.

6 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Albany and the Great Southern Development Commission thank Committee members for the opportunity to make this submission.

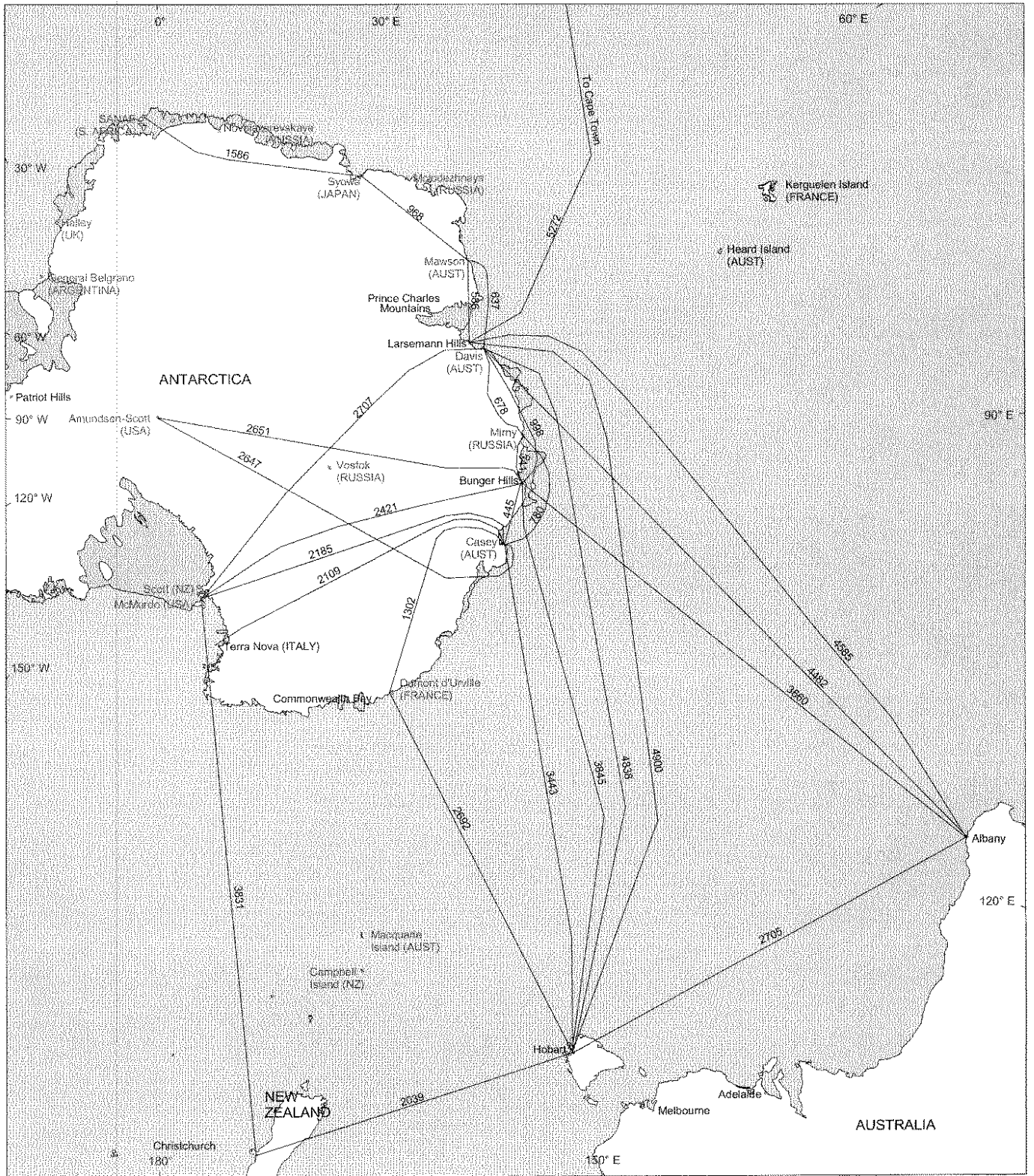
The following recommendations are submitted for Committee consideration:

- That an investigation is initiated by the Federal Government examining the viability of Albany as an additional base of departure for the ongoing servicing of Australia's Antarctic operations.
- That Albany is investigated by the Federal Government as a base of operations for undertaking surveillance measures of Australia's fisheries off Heard and McDonald Islands. Further, that consideration is given to investigating the potential of joint public/private arrangements with Austral Fisheries in its efforts to undertake surveillance measures.
- That opportunities to combine surveillance operations with passenger requirements for Australia's scientific effort in Antarctica be given due consideration

The City of Albany and Great Southern Development Commission believe that these recommendations could lead to enhanced Antarctic operations and improved fisheries management, while at the same time generate significant economic benefits to Albany and the Great Southern region of Western Australian through:

- Increased traffic flow through Albany Regional Airport
- Increased usage of the airport's Instrument Landing System
- Increased aviation fuel sales and other support services
- Increased visitor expenditure in the City
- Increased cargo transport and associated services.

Great circle distances to and within East Antarctica



Distances shown are great circle distances, in kilometres.

Projection: Polar stereographic
1: 27 000 000 scale at Latitude 71° S

Produced by the Australian
Antarctic Data Centre,
July 2000

