

25 February 2004

The Inquiry Secretary
National Capital and External Territories Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Inquiry into the adequacy of funding for Australia's Antarctic Program

Dear Senator Lightfoot and Committee

The Australian Academy of Science supports the submission of its National Committee, the National Committee on Antarctic Research (NCAR). The Academy is aware that effective overall research funding for the involvement of university-based researchers in Antarctic related research has been somewhat eroded over recent years. While supporting the move to broaden transport options, the Academy has also noted concerns of the scientific community regarding the uncertainty of meeting the costs associated with the new role of aircraft in scientific exploration of Antarctica.

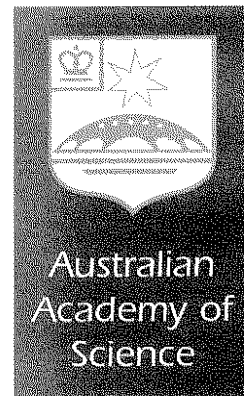
The Academy recognises the significant role of the Australian scientific community in the global research efforts of Antarctic related science. Through our work with the International Council for Science (ICSU) and its related bodies the Academy can confirm that Australia has the highest reputation internationally, and much of our research effort in the fields of climate change research and monitoring, polar ecosystems science, Antarctic geology and glaciology, and polar medicine is considered world-leading. Of particular importance is that the climate of Australia, an island nation, is dominated by oceanic events – therefore getting to know our own climate means understanding the workings of the dynamic ocean systems to our south and their pivotal role in the global climate system.

Australia's strong science reputation has extended into the diplomatic arena affording Australia a unique and unparalleled opportunity and role in terms of internationally collaborative research. At present Australia is involved in collaborative research and monitoring efforts with some 16 nations from institutions based in over 100 cities around the world (see map attached courtesy of the Australian Antarctic Division). It is doubtful that many other environmentally based scientific endeavours could boast such a record. In this respect Australia's Antarctic research efforts offer a unique and unrivalled opportunity to leverage international knowledge and research infrastructure. This is particularly pertinent given Australia's relatively small science population and comparatively limited infrastructure resources. It is also vital to ensure that our training grounds for tomorrow's scientists, our universities, have significant exposure to the world-class cooperative research efforts that Antarctic science allows.

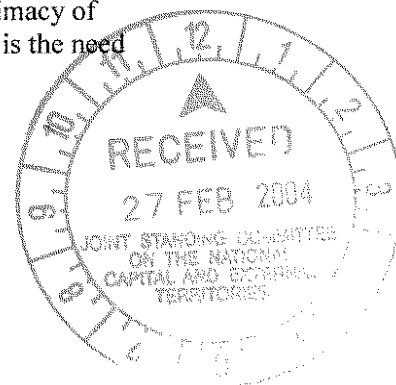
As one of 12 founding members of the historic Antarctic Treaty, an unprecedented demonstration that science can bind nations while also enlarging minds, Australia has much at stake in ensuring that the Treaty continues to support the primacy of science and cooperative endeavour in the Antarctic. Concomitant to this is the need to ensure maximum leverage and coverage this unique situation affords.

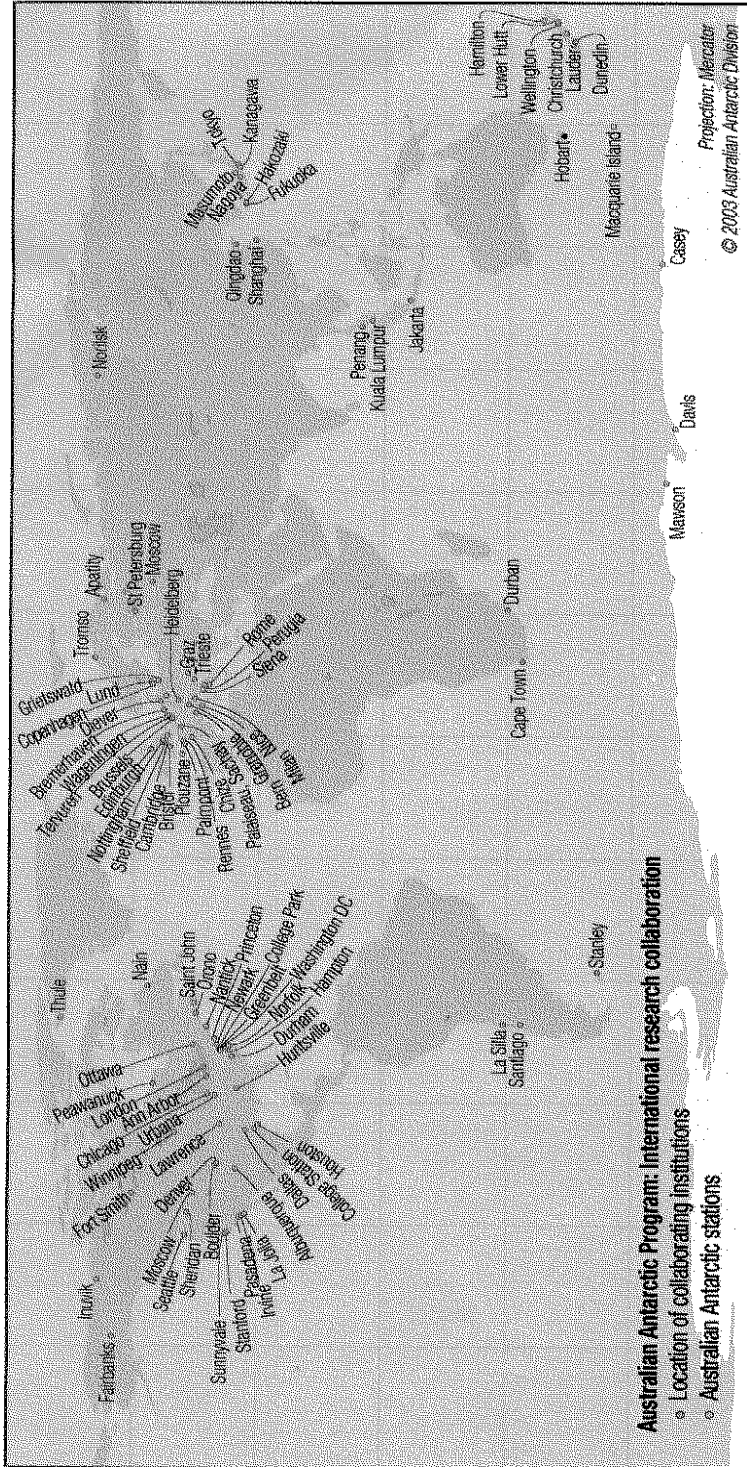
Yours sincerely

W. J. Peacock



CELEBRATING
fifty
years
2004





Australian Antarctic Program: international research collaboration
 ● Location of collaborating institutions
 ○ Australian Antarctic stations

Projection: Mercator
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