

Tabled by Mr Southwick
29/5/08

ANTARCTICA — COOPERATION BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN

In relation to questions raised by Senator Siewert in estimates hearings yesterday, the Director of the Australian Antarctic Division, Dr Tony Press, has provided the following information:

- The arrangement between Japan and Australia is to provide assistance for the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition re-supply of Syowa station in Antarctica.
- Japan's National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) sought Australian assistance to re-supply Syowa in 2008/09 while Japan is waiting for construction of its new ice breaker to be completed.
- Under the arrangement with Japan, a single voyage of *Aurora Australis* will be conducted between January and February 2009.
- The voyage will be conducted under the Australian Antarctic Division's charter of *Aurora Australis*. Australian Antarctic Division staff will be managing and supporting the voyage.
- Some marine science research will be undertaken during the course of the voyage, incidental to the voyage being conducted.
- No whaling related research will be undertaken during the voyage.
- Japanese marine biologists and oceanographers have accompanied most recent Australian research voyages and as recently as November 2007.
- The occasion of the use of *Aurora Australis* by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition in 2008/09 is an opportunity for the conduct of joint research between Japan and Australia.
- On this voyage a research program will be conducted on the distribution of plankton along the ship's cruise route. This work is part of the long-running Southern Ocean Continuous Plankton

Recording study of which the National Institute of Polar Research in Japan is a partner. Data from this study will contribute to the marine biodiversity database being developed for the international Census of Antarctic Marine Life being coordinated for the International Polar year by Australia.

- There will also be an associated research program into the physical and chemical oceanography of the ocean along the ship's cruise track. This is needed to support full interpretation of plankton distribution.
- Samples of live krill will be collected for return to the Australian Antarctic Division to provide material for further joint studies into physiology and reproduction of these creatures.
- The NIPR is Japan's equivalent organisation to the Australian Antarctic Division. NIPR is completely separate from the Japan's Institute of Cetacean Research which undertakes lethal whaling research.
- Logistic cooperation between nations active in Antarctica is encouraged by the Antarctic Treaty. Such cooperation is common between Australia and other Antarctic nations, including Japan. Japan has provided, in the past, significant assistance to Australian Antarctic shipping when *Aurora Australis* suffered mechanical problems.
- Australia's Antarctic program will not be disrupted by this voyage.