

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
Inquiry into Australia Antarctic Division Funding**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** DFAT financial resources allocated to Antarctica

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

- 1.1. In relation to the answer provided to QoN135 at Supplementary Budget Estimates 2022-23:
  - 1.1.1. Please provide any updates to funding, profile or activities since the table was provided.
  - 1.1.2. Where there have been changes, please describe why those changes have occurred.
- 1.2. Who are the members of the Deputy Secretary strategic panel on Antarctic Affairs?
  - 1.2.1. Please provide the dates on which the panel has met.
- 1.3. Please provide a copy of the public diplomacy plan for post engagement on Antarctic issues, and a list of the activities completed (and dates on which they were completed) under this plan.
- 1.4. Please provide a breakdown of any additional funding DFAT has received for the Antarctic in each Budget update since April 2022, in the same table as provided in Q135.
  - 1.4.1. Please provide details of how the funding is to be used.

**Answer**

1.1

DFAT's Antarctic projections, profile and activities remain the same as answered in QoN 135.

1.2

Members of the panel include:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (co-chair)
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (co-chair)
- Attorney General's Department
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Defence
- Department of Finance
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development Communications and the Arts
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- Office of National Intelligence; and
- Other agencies invited by the Chairs.

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As per the Panel's Terms of Reference, the Panel meets at least twice a year in person. The Panel has met on 5 May, 8 September, and 30 November 2022, as well as 19 May and 19 September 2023.

1.3

Questions on notice are for the provision of answers and not for the production of documents.

Examples of public diplomacy activities include an online event for International Women's Day on 'Women at Frontiers: Antarctica and Space', and a Diplomatic Corp reception at the National Museum of Australia celebrating Antarctica as a place of peace and science (see <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-people/antarctica-land-science-and-peace>).

1.4

Details of funding remain as outlined in QON 135.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** DFAT staffing resources allocated to Antarctica

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

Please provide details of the number of DFAT staff dedicated to Antarctica, their classification, whether they are full or part-time, in which Division they are based, and in which city they are based.

**Answer**

As at 8 May 2024, there are four A-based staff in the Antarctic Section of International Law Branch II in Legal Division – one Director (EL2) and three EL1s. In addition, the First Assistant Secretary of Legal Division is Australia’s Senior Official on Antarctica. The Assistant Secretary of International Law Branch II and the Director of the DFAT Tasmanian State Office also cover issues related to Antarctica as part of their roles.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** Australia's strategic interests in Antarctica

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

1. DFAT's submission identifies maintaining Antarctica's freedom from political confrontation as a key national interest for Australia.
  - 1.1. Does DFAT assess political confrontation or the risk of political confrontation over Antarctica is increasing or decreasing?
  - 1.2. On what dates has DFAT provided advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office on the risk of political confrontation in Antarctica?

**Answer**

Australia remains committed to working with international partners to strengthen the Antarctic Treaty System in order to maintain Antarctica's freedom from strategic or political confrontation. DFAT regularly provides advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office on matters related to Antarctica.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
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**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** CAAMLRL

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

1. The answer provided to QoN135 at Supplementary Budget Estimates 2022-23 included a number of examples of Australia's concerns and statements regarding Russia's actions from the 41st meeting of CCAMLRL.
  - 1.1. Please provide any additional comments, statements and actions by Australia in relation to concerns about Russia's actions in Antarctica since that question was answered on 29 March 2023.
  - 1.2. Has DFAT been asked for, or provided, advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office regarding Russia's actions in Antarctica?
    - 1.2.1. If so, on what dates and in what form?

**Answer**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (Australian Antarctic Division) is the lead agency for CCAMLRL.

DFAT provides advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office on a range of matters related to Antarctica.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** Professor Rothwell

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

1. Professor Rothwell told the committee: To conclude, any diminution, disruption or reduction of the AAD science program has the potential to create further uncertainty as to the commitment and engagement of Australia to Antarctica. This in turn has implications for Australian Antarctic sovereignty.

- 1.1. Does DFAT agree with Professor Rothwell's assessment?
- 1.2. If not, why not?

**Answer**

Australia remains a global leader in Antarctic science, operations, environmental protection, and the Antarctic Treaty System. Article IV of the Antarctic Treaty states, inter alia, that: "No acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica or create any right of sovereignty in Antarctica."

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

**Topic:** Iran base

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

1. In September 2023, media reported (<https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iran/2023/09/28/iran-says-it-is-planning-a-navy-base-in-antarctica/>) that Iran was planning to build a Navy base on Antarctica. Is DFAT aware of the reports?
  - 1.1. Has DFAT been asked for or provided advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office regarding the reported proposal?
  - 1.2. If so, when?

**Answer**

The Department regularly provides advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office on matters related to Antarctica, including Australia's commitment to upholding the norms of non-militarisation, environmental protection, and freedom of scientific investigation.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

– Hearing Name

Hearing Date: 23 April 2024

Topic: Funding for Antarctic science and research

Senator Jonathon Duniam

Question

1. Has DFAT provided advice to the Foreign Minister regarding the cuts to Australian Antarctic research and science (and/or the \$41.4 million overspend) and its impact on Australia's ability to respond to geopolitical challenges in the Antarctic?

1.1. If so, please provide the dates on which the advice was provided, who provided the advice, and in what form the advice was provided.

Answer

Questions on Australia's Antarctic research and science are for the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (Australian Antarctic Division). DFAT provides a range of advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office on matters related to Antarctica.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
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**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** Space and Antarctic science

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

1. In relation to the commitment in the 2022 Update to the Antarctic Strategy and Action Plan to strengthening our collaborative relationships with Antarctic nations to “identify new opportunities with Australia’s expanding space sector for Antarctic science, medicine, safety, environmental monitoring, and communications” please provide the committee with:
  - 1.1. A list of projects DFAT is undertaking or involved as part of meeting this commitment, along with the budget and ASL allocated to each project, broken down by year across the current and forward estimates years. Please include the start date of each project and the projected completion date for each project.
  - 1.2. A list of the new opportunities identified through this work to date.
  - 1.3. A list of the countries with which DFAT is currently engaged to identify the new opportunities.

**Answer**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (Australian Antarctic Division) and the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Australian Space Agency) lead on Antarctica and space issues.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
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**QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written**

**Topic:** Labor's \$1.2 billion cuts to space programs

**Senator Jonathon Duniam**

**Question**

1. Please provide a copy of the talking points provided to the Australian missions to the 29 Consultative Parties about Labor's decision to cut funding to the space program.
2. Please provide a list of the communications and representations DFAT has made and received from Consultative Party countries regarding Labor's decision to cut the space program.
3. Regarding Labor's decision to cut \$1.2bn from Australia's space program by axing the National Space Mission for Earth Observation (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-29/labor-axes-morrison-government-satellite-program/102538686News>):
  - 3.1. Has DFAT ceased or modified any programs or projects related to collaboration on identifying new opportunities with Australia's expanding space sector for Antarctic science, medicine, safety, environmental monitoring, and communications?
    - 3.1.1. If so, please list the programs or projects, and how they have ceased or been modified, and the cost.
  - 3.2. Has DFAT ceased or modified any contracts in relation to collaboration on identifying new opportunities with Australia's expanding space sector for Antarctic science, medicine, safety, environmental monitoring, and communications?
    - 3.2.1. If so, please list the contracts, and how they have ceased or been modified, and the cost of doing so.
  - 3.3. Has the decision resulted in any DFAT staff cuts or reductions in hours of staff engaged on projects or programs related to collaboration on identifying new opportunities with Australia's expanding space sector for Antarctic science, medicine, safety, environmental monitoring, and communications?
    - 3.3.1. If so, please list the number of staff impacted, the number of staff axed, the number of staff hours reduced, where the impacted staff are based, the levels of staff impacted.

**Answer**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (Australian Antarctic Division) and the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Australian Space Agency) lead on Antarctica and space issues.