
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Antarctica: Australia's Pristine Frontier

**Report on the adequacy of funding for Australia's Antarctic
Program**

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories

June 2005
Canberra

© Commonwealth of Australia 2005

ISBN 0 642 78649 6



Contents

Foreword	vii
Membership of the Committee	ix
41st Parliament	ix
40th Parliament	ix
Terms of reference	xi
List of abbreviations	xiii
List of recommendations	xv
1 Introduction	1
Australia's presence in the Antarctic region	2
The Australian Antarctic Territory.....	2
The Australian Antarctic Division.....	3
Australia's Antarctic stations	3
Australia's Antarctic Program	4
Scrutiny of Australia's Antarctic Program	5
Background and conduct of the Committee's inquiry	8
Structure of the report	10
2 Funding for Australia's Antarctic Program	11
An overview	11
2005-06 Federal Budget	14
Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre	14
Tasmanian Government contribution	15
Concerns over the adequacy of AAD funding	17

Committee comment	19
3 Operations and logistical support.....	21
The Air Transport project	22
Background	22
Antarctic science community's views on the air link	25
Albany proposal	28
Federal Budget 2005-06: Air link commitment	31
Committee comment: Hobart-Casey Air Link	32
Committee comment: Albany Proposal	33
Logistical support for Australia's Antarctic marine research program.....	33
Committee comment	35
Potential for consolidating Australia's Antarctic stations.....	36
AAD operations at Macquarie Island	38
Committee comment	39
4 Australia's obligations under the Antarctic Treaty System.....	41
The Antarctic Treaty System.....	41
The Antarctic Treaty	42
Australia's role in the Antarctic Treaty System	42
International collaboration	44
Opportunities for further collaboration	47
Committee comment	50
5 Conservation and protection of the Antarctic environment	51
Australia's international obligations	51
Preserving marine life in the Southern Ocean.....	52
The Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve	53
Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing	54
Human impacts in Antarctica.....	60
Remediation of waste sites	61
Tourism in Antarctica	64
Cultural heritage management: Mawson's Huts	66
Concerns over AAD funding for cultural heritage management	67

6	Australia's Antarctic science program	71
	An overview	71
	Evaluation of Australia's Antarctic Science Program.....	74
	Science Strategy 2004/05-2008/09	76
	The Australian Antarctic science grants scheme	77
	Budget limitations restricting opportunities for 'new' science.....	79
	Committee comment	80
	Raising the public profile of Antarctic science	81
	Committee comment	84
	Additional Comments—Senator Stott Despoja.....	85
	Appendix A – List of submissions.....	87
	Appendix B – List of exhibits	89
	Appendix C – List of witnesses appearing at public hearings	91
	Hobart – Tuesday, 16 March 2004.....	91
	Albany – Friday, 30 April 2004	92
	Canberra – Wednesday, 23 June 2004	92

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Summary of resources for the Australian Antarctic Division, 2003-04 and 2004-05	12
Table 2.2	Australian Antarctic Division Budget % by Function	13
Table 2.3	Australian Antarctic Division revenue since 1999-2000	13
Table 2.4	Total resources for Outcome 2: Antarctic	15
Table 2.5	Tasmanian Government Expenditure for Management of Scientific Programs on Macquarie Island	16
Table 3.1	Australia-Antarctica Air Link.....	32
Table 5.1	IUU catch estimates and total allowable catch from HIMI, 1999 - 2003.....	55
Table 6.1	Three models for Antarctic research adopted by National Antarctic programs	74
Table 6.2	Usage Statistics for Australian Antarctic Division website	83
Table 6.3	Most popular web pages within Australian Antarctic Division website	83



Foreword

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to present this unanimous report on the adequacy of funding for Australia's Antarctic Program.

Prior to conducting a review of Australia's Antarctic Territory as part of a general monitoring of the nation's external territories, the Committee sought a briefing from the Australian Antarctic Division as the lead agency for Australia's Antarctic Program.

The ensuing briefing provided a fascinating insight into the positive nature and scale of the work being carried out by Australian researchers in Antarctica. However, during the briefing, it also became clear that the critical issue confronting Australia's Antarctic Program was the question of whether the Antarctic Division was receiving adequate funding to achieve the Government's stated goals for the frozen continent.

The issue of the adequacy of funding for Australia's Antarctic Program therefore became the focal point of the Committee's inquiry.

The inquiry lapsed with the dissolution of the 40th Parliament, but, was recommenced by the new committee in the 41st Parliament.

The Government's goals for Antarctica reflect Australia's status as a major player in Antarctic affairs. The goals promote participation in the Antarctic Treaty System and enhanced influence within that System, protection of the Antarctic environment, an understanding of the role of Antarctica in the global climate system and, the undertaking of scientific work of practical, economic and national significance.

Meeting these goals and consolidating Australia's leading reputation in Antarctica requires substantial financial support. Operating in such an unpredictable, hostile environment is an expensive exercise, but one which is critical if Australia is to preserve its sovereignty over its Australian Antarctic Territory.

During the inquiry, the Committee heard of the fundamental need to establish an inter-continental air link between Tasmania and the Australian Antarctic Territory. It was suggested that an air link would attract a wider spectrum of researchers to the continent. Currently, researchers are reliant predominately, on the research and resupply vessel *Aurora Australis* which necessarily requires that a significant amount of its time be spent at sea.

Obviously, the Committee was pleased to learn of a commitment in the 2005-06 Budget to fund an inter-continental air link from Hobart to Antarctica. However, in the Committee's view, the introduction of the air link does not diminish the need for additional funding to be invested in Australia's Antarctic Program. The Australian Antarctic Division has continued to develop new initiatives in spite of a generally static budget through the implementation of innovative cost-saving measures. Yet the evidence the Committee received suggested the Division now has exhausted all avenues for creating meaningful savings.

Australia's contribution to Antarctic science is considered world-leading by scientific peers and the efforts of our researchers should receive greater domestic recognition, particularly given that much of the science being undertaken has implications for the region as well as global relevance.

The Committee is grateful to those who participated in the inquiry. As always, I also very much appreciate the cooperative way that the Committee invariably works on inquiries and the subsequent report.

Senator Ross Lightfoot
Chairman



Membership of the Committee

41st Parliament

Chair Senator Ross Lightfoot

Deputy Chair Senator Trish Crossin

Members The Hon Ian Causley MP

Ms Annette Ellis MP

Mr Paul Neville MP

Ms Sophie Panopoulos MP

Mr Patrick Secker MP

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Senator John Hogg

Senator Kerry O'Brien

Senator Nigel Scullion

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja

40th Parliament

Chair Senator Ross Lightfoot

Deputy Chair Senator Trish Crossin

Members The Hon Ian Causley MP

Ms Annette Ellis MP

Mr Michael Johnson MP
(to 19 February 2004)

Mr Paul Neville MP

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Mr Cameron Thompson MP

Dr Mal Washer MP
(from 19 February 2004)

Senator John Hogg

Senator Kate Lundy

Senator Nigel Scullion

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja

Committee secretariat

41st Parliament

Committee Secretary Ms Beverley Forbes
Inquiry Secretary Mr Justin Baker
Principal
Parliamentary Officer Dr Sonia Palmieri
Administrative Officers Mr Andrew McGowan
Mr Robert Nicol

40th Parliament

Committee Secretary Mrs Margaret Swieringa
Inquiry Secretary Mr Quinton Clements
Research Officers Ms Bronwen Jagers
Mr Justin Baker
Administrative Officer Mr Daniel Miletic



Terms of reference

Resolved 10 September 2003:

That, on the basis of the annual report of the Department of the Environment and Heritage for 2001-02, which has responsibility for the Australian Antarctic Division and the Antarctic Program, in relation to the Australian Antarctic Territory and the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands, and which stands referred to the Committee by the House of Representatives for any inquiry it may wish to make, the Committee conduct an inquiry and report on the adequacy of funding for the Australian Antarctic Division to meet the four goals set for advancing Australia's Antarctic interests:

- Enhancing Australia's influence in the Antarctic Treaty system;
- Protecting the Antarctic environment;
- Understanding Antarctica's role in the global climate system; and
- Conducting scientific research of practical, economic or national significance.

Resolved 26 November 2003:

That the basis of the inquiry into the adequacy of funding for the Australian Antarctic Program be extended to include the Annual Report of the Department of the Environment and Heritage for 2002-03, which was presented in the House of Representatives on 4 November 2003 and stands referred to the Committee for any inquiry it wishes to make.

Resolved 8 December 2004:

That the basis of the inquiry into the adequacy of funding for the Australian Antarctic Program be extended to include the Annual Report of the Department of the Environment and Heritage for 2003-04, which was presented in the House of Representatives on 17 November 2004 and stands referred to the Committee for any inquiry it wishes to make.



List of abbreviations

AAD or the Division	Australian Antarctic Division
AAP	Australian Associated Press
AAT	Australian Antarctic Territory
AFFA	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
AGSO	Australian Geological Survey Organisation
ANARE	Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions
ASAC	Antarctic Science Advisory Committee
ATCM	Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting
BoM	Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology
CASA	Construcciones Aeronáuticas S.A. (Spain)
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCAS	Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Seals
COMNAP	Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre

CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EMS	environmental management system
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GSDC	Great Southern Development Commission
HIMI	Heard Island and McDonald Islands
IASOS	Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies
ICSU	International Council for Science
IGY	International Geophysical Year
IPY	International Polar Year
IUU	Illegal, unregulated and unreported (fishing)
IWC	International Whaling Commission
JACARA	Joint Australian Centre for Astrophysical Research in Antarctica
JSCNCET	Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
NCAR	National Committee on Antarctic Research
SCALOP	Scientific Committee on Antarctic Logistics and Operations
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UNSW	University of New South Wales



List of recommendations

3 Operations and logistical support

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government makes funding available in the 2005-06 financial year to enable a scoping study to be conducted to determine the need for a new dedicated marine research vessel to advance marine science in general and, the Australian Government's goals for Australia's Antarctic program in particular. (para 3.53)

4 Australia's obligations under the Antarctic Treaty System

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government makes an appreciable investment commensurate with Australia's significant involvement in polar activities to support Australian programs planned for the International Polar Year 2007-2008 and ensures that Australia plays a leading role in International Polar Year activities. In addition, the Committee notes the need for additional funds to be made available immediately for this purpose. (para 4.25)

5 Conservation and protection of the Antarctic environment

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government allocate an additional \$50 million to the budget of the Department of the Environment and Heritage over a ten-year period, to be administered

under Australia's Antarctic Program, specifically for the remediation of past work sites in the Australian Antarctic Territory. (para 5.50)

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that additional funding be provided to enable the Australian Antarctic Division to comply with its responsibilities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)* for its work with the cultural heritage management of Mawson's Huts. The Committee also encourages the continuation of partnership links with community sponsors to continue the restoration work of Mawson's Huts. (para 5.73)

6 Australia's Antarctic science program

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the current appropriation for the Australian Antarctic Science grants scheme administered by the Australian Antarctic Division be doubled from the current level of approximately \$700,000 per annum for the remainder of the Science Strategy 2004/05-2008/09 and be reassessed after that period. (para 6.24)