

AAD achieves international environmental standard

The AAD received certification on 4 September 2002 for its environmental management system (EMS) to the international standard ISO14001. Certification – with no nonconformances – is a major milestone in Australia's impressive history of protecting the Antarctic environment.

Australia is the first national operator amongst the Antarctic Treaty parties to implement a certified EMS. News of our certification to the international standard was warmly received by Treaty Parties at the meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection in Warsaw in September, and Australia will be taking forward an EMS progress report to the next meeting.

In recommending certification, the EMS auditors (NATA Certification Systems International) praised the extraordinarily high awareness of environmental issues and commitment to environmental protection evident amongst all AAD staff, both in Australia and at the Antarctic stations.

ISO14001 was established in 1996 to answer the growing need worldwide for a systematic approach to the management of an organisation's environmental responsibilities, with a focus on continual improvement.

The process of implementing an EMS began in earnest for the AAD in 2000 with an initial environmental review, which described the AAD's activities at its various sites and the policies and procedures that were already in place to address the associated environmental issues. Then followed a detailed analysis of the activities to determine possible environmental impacts, a risk analysis to assess their likelihood and consequences, and a process of ranking their significance.

Responsibility for groups of activities at specific sites was assigned to 'key section managers', who developed a suite of environmental management programs under

broad objectives, including tasks, deadlines and responsible officers.

The AAD officially launched its Environmental Policy in December 2001, the first major tangible output of the EMS process. The Policy sets out the AAD's charter and its environmental commitments with respect to the conduct of its operations.

The EMS is underpinned by a software system, ISOSoft 14001, which collates essential background information, provides a register of environmental management program details, and includes an automatic email reminder system which notifies officers when an EMS task falls due.

Implementing the EMS required that the AAD develop a register of legal and other requirements. Project staff compiled a list of 44 environmental laws and agreements under Commonwealth and Tasmanian jurisdictions, and developed a protocol under which the AAD's achievement of compliance with these instruments could be tested. The AAD's documented procedures and instructions, developed over some 50 years, were collated, updated, and registered.

The EMS has also focused attention and resources on other organisation-wide improvements, including the development of a pilot 'e-learning' program – an interactive web-based environmental awareness program which all staff will complete as part of the AAD's induction program. Document control, records management, and incident reporting procedures developed for the EMS will mesh with those being developed for the organisation as a whole.

In order to ensure that the system continues to function effectively, a formal review by AAD senior management is conducted every six months, followed by an external surveillance audit to ensure continued compliance with the standard.



From left: Phil Crosby (NCSI), Martyn Summers (NCSI), Tom Maggs (AAD), Ewan McIvor (AAD).

A copy of the AAD Environmental Policy and the respective ISO14001 EMS certificate is proudly displayed at the Kingston Headquarters, the Hobart wharf Cargo Facility, and at each Antarctic station. ■

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Further information on the AAD's environmental management system is available at <http://www.aad.gov.au/environment/policy/policy_intro.asp>.

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