



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
Australian Antarctic Division

General Information for Applicants

Australia's Antarctic Program 2012/13

Expeditioner Employment

Thank you for your interest in employment with Australia's Antarctic Program (AAP) for 2012/13.

This document provides you with general information to enable you to make an informed decision about proceeding with an application.

Working in Antarctica is not for everybody. The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) requires people with a wide range of skills and abilities to undertake and support science programs and maintain our three continental stations Casey (including the Wilkins Runway site), Davis, Mawson and our subantarctic station on Macquarie Island. You could be considered for employment at any one of our four stations. We require people who can live and work together harmoniously in often harsh and inhospitable conditions. The AAD places great importance on this aspect and not only assesses technical capability but also undertakes rigorous assessment of applicants' personal qualities.

The AAD acknowledges that successful expeditions to Antarctica depend on expeditioners being content with their decision to leave their homes and families to live and work in Antarctica. The resultant separation can mean a struggle with difficult personal problems that should be assessed by all those involved. You should think carefully about what effect separation from your loved ones might have. We would encourage you to discuss your application with them before you submit it.

If you believe you meet our requirements after reading the information in this document and the relevant job description, please complete the online application form.

Even if the timing is not right for you at the present, let us know you're interested and we can look at the possibility of employment next year or later.

ELIGIBILITY

Only Australian citizens, Australian residents with proof of eligibility to work in Australia and New Zealand citizens are eligible to apply.

BACKGROUND

The AAD (a Division of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) leads the Australian Antarctic Program.

The Australian Antarctic Program has four goals:

1. Maintain the Antarctic Treaty System and enhance Australia's influence in it.
2. Protect the Antarctic environment.
3. Understand the role of Antarctica in the global climate system.
4. Undertake scientific work of practical, economic and national significance.

Under its charter the Australian Antarctic Division

- administers the Australian Antarctic Territory and the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands
- conducts research in high priority areas of Antarctic science
- coordinates and manages Australia's logistic program in Antarctica
- promotes Antarctic research in universities through grants and the provision of logistic support
- develops policy proposals and provides advice on Australia's Antarctic interests
- promotes Australia's Antarctic interests within the Antarctic Treaty System
- maintains a continuing presence in the region through permanent stations, the establishment of field bases and the provision of transport, communication and medical services
- acts as the primary source of Australian Antarctic information

Around 70 expeditioners spend the winter on our stations with the summer population increasing to approximately 300. Each station is staffed by a range of people from varied backgrounds, professions and employers.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

An attractive set of employment conditions is available for expeditioner employees.

On top of the applicable salary rate (depending on the job applied for) expeditioner employees also receive significant Antarctic Duty Allowances, when in Antarctica (currently \$52,632 per annum).

In addition you will also receive generous superannuation payments.

Normal PAYG taxation arrangements apply. The only taxation concession available is a Special Zone A rebate.

The AAD generally meets the cost of:

- airfares to and from Tasmania including pre-embarkation reunion travel;
- accommodation while in Tasmania as well as a daily allowance for miscellaneous expenditure (currently \$17.30);
- transport to and from accommodation in Hobart and the AAD at Kingston (usually by bus);
- accommodation, protective clothing, food and some sundry items (eg toiletries) while in Antarctica;
- transportation of 1 cubic metre (up to 250 kg) of personal goods to Hobart and on return to your home location; and
- in some cases, storage of household goods and a motor vehicle.

In Antarctica, expeditioners can normally expect to work a minimum 8 hrs per day (excluding lunch) Monday to Friday and about 4 hours on Saturday morning in their primary role (eg carpenter, mechanic, etc). In addition, Saturday afternoon typically requires all expeditioners to take on community duties. Sunday is usually a rest day. However, expeditioners should also recognise that there will be occasions where additional work will be required to be completed.

WORKPLACE DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Workplace Diversity brings together key elements of Government policy including legislation that enshrines the basic principles of equal opportunity and human rights policies that embody the principles of equity and merit.

The rationale underpinning workplace diversity is that the individual qualities and skills possessed by our colleagues - educational background, ethnic, religious and cultural, physical attributes and gender - are an indispensable asset in creating a harmonious, productive working environment and in achieving our business objectives.

Completion of diversity related questions in the online application is voluntary; however your response will assist us to structure selection committees appropriately and to make any other arrangements that may be required.

Your response will also assist us to evaluate whether our recruitment strategies are appropriate.

Where women, Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders are to be interviewed, the selection committee will, where practicable, have a member of that group on the committee.

MERIT

Employment decisions in the Australian Public Service (APS) are based on merit.

A decision is based on merit if:

- a) an assessment is made of the relative suitability of the candidates for the duties, using a competitive selection process;
- b) the assessment is based on the relationship between the candidates' work-related qualities and the work-related qualities genuinely required for the duties;
- c) the assessment focuses on the relative capacity of the candidates to achieve outcomes related to the duties; and
- d) the assessment is the primary consideration in making the decision.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

How long will I be employed for?

Various employment periods are available. These are detailed in the online application.

What happens between starting employment and leaving for Antarctica?

During the pre departure period (between two weeks and three months) you will have accommodation in Hobart, Tasmania arranged and paid for you (if you are recruited from outside Southern Tasmania). You will be required to complete a mandatory training program which ensures that you are ready to undertake your job in Antarctica, and will not put yourself, others or the environment at risk. The training program includes on and offsite daily and residential components.

How do I get there?

The AAD uses ice-strengthened ships to conduct resupply and research voyages, and also transfers personnel between Hobart and Casey by using an A319 aircraft. Access to the continental research stations is possible only in summer, so when the last ship or aircraft leaves Antarctica in March/April, there is no way to return to Australia until the following summer (usually October). Helicopters or small boats are used to transport expeditioners between the ship and research stations, depending upon ice conditions at the time.

Macquarie Island is usually only visited at the end of each summer by an AAD resupply vessel, when the changeover of winter personnel is made. Access to the island at other times is by passing tourist vessels, making the opportunity to deliver cargo and supplies very limited.

What are the living quarters like?

Buildings are comfortable and functional for living and working. They are insulated and strengthened to withstand low temperatures and fierce winds. The layout of the research stations vary, but each has scientific laboratories, powerhouses, workshops, a small medical facility, stores, communication facilities, kitchen, mess, recreation and expeditioner rooms. There is a mixture of shared and single accommodation at each research station. Accommodation is allocated according to numbers on station.

What clothes and personal items do I have to take?

The buildings are well heated and comfortable, so everyday casual clothing and shoes is all you require for indoors. All specialised Antarctic clothing is supplied soon after arrival at the AAD. Whilst on station, expeditioners are fully maintained (toiletries, health care etc), however expeditioners often choose to take some preferred 'special' toiletry items.

What will I eat ?

Each research station has its own Chef. The food supplied is similar in variety to that obtained in Australia. Fresh vegetables are available for the first few weeks after the ship's departure. Limited hydroponic produce is also grown on station. We will endeavour to meet any special dietary requirements wherever possible. Emphasis is placed on providing a balanced nutritional diet.

How do I get paid?

Your pay is paid fortnightly into a nominated financial institution. Payslips are available at least the day before payday via the AAD intranet Employee Self Service facility. You will be provided with access to this facility on commencement.

Do I need any cash on station?

Everything on station is provided except for alcohol which is pre-purchased on your behalf and transported to station. Cash is required to make purchases on the ships travelling to and from Antarctica, although the range of goods is generally very limited. Tourist vessels may visit the station during the summer period, many of which have souvenirs for sale. Credit cards and cheques are not usually accepted. It is recommended that \$300 is sufficient for shorter employment periods and \$500 for longer employment periods.

Will I have the opportunity to "explore" Antarctica?

Once field training has been completed, subject to work commitments, opportunities may arise where expeditioners can participate in field trips to outlying huts and areas of special interest. Opportunities may be limited over the summer period due to very tight work schedules.

What do I do after work?

A range of recreational facilities is provided at the research stations. Libraries of books, films, records, compact discs, DVDs and video cassettes are available. A dart board, billiard and table tennis tables, gymnasium equipment, rock climbing wall, spa, sauna and cross country skis are also provided. Photography and computer based activities are popular.

Expeditioners are required to perform their own housework as well as help out with station duties such as kitchen hand, garbage runs and major cleaning. It is often possible for expeditioners to pursue their hobbies in Antarctica; some need to provide their own materials.

Who will I be working with?

The mix of people involved in the AAP will vary according to the research station and the time of year. Each station has a station leader, medical practitioner, chef, Australian and international scientists, communications support employees, mechanics, field training employees and building trades employees. Women are encouraged to apply for any job for which they are qualified. Women have been employed in most jobs in supporting AAP. The

AAD is committed to increasing the numbers of women employed in Antarctica, across all employment categories.

How cold is it really?

At the Antarctic research stations maximum daily temperatures average around -1°C to +3°C during summer and winter temperatures average between -20°C and -30°C. The climate is characterised by very low temperatures, fierce winds, dryness and frequent blizzards. The Macquarie Island climate varies little through the year, being wet and windy, with temperatures of around -2°C to +12°C.

How can I contact home?

During summer, mail is delivered to the research stations by ship once or twice each season dependant on shipping schedules. In winter, written messages are sent by facsimile or email. Modern satellite communications allow ready telephone access between Australia and the research stations. Rates are comparable to Australian STD charges. Phone calls to or from ships can be very expensive. Email provides a cheap and effective means of communication if you have the requisite set up at home. Please note that Skype is not available on Antarctic stations.

How might the time away affect my family?

Our brochure entitled 'Antarctic Separation' will provide you with more information. It is available by telephoning the Expeditioner Liaison and Training Coordinator on free call 1800 030 680.

ANTARCTIC BOOKS

The AAD Library has a comprehensive collection of Polar material. A reading list can be obtained from the AAD.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All jobs require you to complete the online application form.

All jobs have a wide range of skill requirements – in a number of cases, which will be indicated on the job description, we do not expect you to meet the full range of requirements so please still apply if you meet some of the requirements.

As we are not seeking exhaustive information about your work history, it is important that you provide us with clear information about your recent work to enable our assessors to make a preliminary assessment of whether you have what we want or not. Some resumes are very brief and do not provide sufficient information for our needs. If your's is in this category please attach further information or make sure you complete the questionnaire (where required) fully.

It is also important that you provide us with a phone contact number that we can reach you on during normal business hours ie 8:30am - 5:00 pm eastern daylight saving time. If you are not contactable during these hours please indicate an email address that you regularly access

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The following is a brief explanation of the expeditioner selection process, to assist applicants to understand how their applications will be assessed. It is intended as a guide only.

The AAD widely uses selection centres for the assessment of applicant's personal qualities. This involves bringing together all applicants who pass initial technical screening to a central location where individual's personal qualities are assessed by an independent panel. It is expected that selection centres will be held in some or all of the following locations; Hobart, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide during March/April 2012. All shortlisted applicants who have not had recent Antarctic employment are required to attend. Station Leader applicants attend a

separate week long selection centre usually held in early May. Antarctic Medical Practitioners may be assessed on an individual basis.

Please note: We are not recruiting Station Leaders for the 2012/13 season.

Stage 1 - Registration and shortlisting

- On submission of online applications an acknowledgment letter is sent to the applicant immediately.
- Technical experts assess each application against the advertised requirements of the job. Only those applicants considered to best meet these requirements are shortlisted for interview. Performance reports are also considered for past participants.
- Some applicants may be contacted by telephone during this stage to discuss technical aspects of their application.
- A shortlisting report is prepared for approval by an appropriately authorised officer (the delegate). When the report is approved, those applicants not included on the shortlist are advised in writing.
- The *Confidential Checklist of Medical History* for those on the shortlist is then assessed by the Polar Medicine Unit to identify medical conditions which may preclude selection.

This stage is completed 1-2 months after the closing date for applications.

Stage 2 - Assessment

- Technical interviews will usually be held shortly after the completion of stage 1 and are generally conducted in conjunction with selection centres. Separate arrangements will be advised for those not attending selection centres.
- Applicants who are unsuccessful following selection centres are advised in writing.
- Applicants being considered further will complete a medical examination, adaptability assessment and other pre-employment checks. It should be noted that an invitation to attend these assessments is not a guarantee of getting a job.

This assessment stage may take several weeks to complete.

Stage 3 - Post interview arrangements and final report

- All information obtained through the selection process is taken into account to enable a final selection report to be written, which includes details of preferred applicants and reserves. When this report is approved by the delegate, applicants not selected are advised in writing and offers of employment are made to successful applicants.

The full selection process can take up to 6 months to complete however, we aim to provide successful applicants with as much notice as possible to ensure they have sufficient time to prepare for their employment with us.

If we do attract enough suitable applicants, the AAD may re-advertise or canvass interest from former successful applicants.