

# AUSTRALIA ON THE WORLD STAGE.

The Australian Government Antarctic Division this year played its part as a contributor to international Antarctic science, policy and operations.

In July, Australia hosted the Open Science Conference of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and the annual meeting of the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs, which attracted close to 900 delegates from around the world, to Hobart. The Australian Government Antarctic Division's involvement in these international organisations ensures Australia has a say in scientific, policy and operational issues and decisions affecting the whole of Antarctica. Antarctic Division staff also took the opportunity to showcase their work to an international audience, contributing 17% of the talks and posters presented. The combined Australian Antarctic programme made up 30% of the presentation effort.

Among the research presented was Jason Gedamke's work on passive acoustic technology to study the seasonal distribution of whales (page 5). This work is important if we are to understand as much as possible about the populations and life histories of these important animals and their place in the Antarctic ecosystem. Jason and his colleagues' poster was selected as the Best Open Science Conference Poster from some 350 on display.

Building on the important marine mammal research being conducted at the Australian Government Antarctic Division, the Division was this year awarded \$2.5 million over four years to establish the Australian Centre for Applied Marine Mammal Science. In collaboration with researchers and institutions around Australia, the Centre will contribute to the development and implementation of management and policy relating to whales, dolphins, seals and dugongs.

The Australian-Antarctic Airlink is again making headlines, with the new aircraft, an Airbus A319, contracted recently. The aircraft has a range of 6500 nautical miles, allowing it to fly from Hobart to Antarctica and return without refuelling. The Airlink will help attract international scientists to the Australian Antarctic programme and expand the research opportunities for our own scientists.



KIERAN LAWTON

As we approach this new operational era the Australian Government Antarctic Division is proactively addressing new and imposing challenges that will influence our work in Antarctica – including climate change and the global escalation in the price of oil. Through the new Antarctic Futures Project, the Antarctic Division will present a vision of Australia's role in Antarctica to 2020, providing context for short, medium and long-term decision-making.

One thing is already certain; Australia, through the Antarctic Division, will continue to undertake globally important Antarctic science, such as that committed to in our new Environmental Protection and Change programme (page 28). We will also continue to help protect the Antarctic and Southern Ocean environment and its resources through the Antarctic Treaty, the Committee for Environmental Protection and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

As you read this a new Antarctic season is well underway, as are preparations for the start of the International Polar Year (IPY) in March 2007. The Australian Government Antarctic Division will host four IPY projects covering the broad themes of biological diversity, alien species, solar variability and climate, and human health, in Antarctica. The international projects will leave a legacy of collaboration that will support Antarctic research into the future and inspire and encourage a new generation of scientists.

Finally, you may have noticed our new name. The Australian Antarctic Division is now known as the Australian Government Antarctic Division, reflecting the importance the Australian Government places in Australia's Antarctic interests.

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Director, AGAD