

# Celebrating 25 years in Hobart

Twenty five years ago, on April 22, 1981, Prince Charles opened the Australian Antarctic Division's (AAD) new headquarters in Kingston, Tasmania. It had been a roller coaster ride from the Division's original headquarters in St Kilda Road in Melbourne. But it marked the beginning of a new era for the Division and for its home port of Hobart.

An influx of Melbourne staff to Hobart, the recruitment of new staff, and a significant rebuilding programme in Antarctica, reinvigorated the organisation and kick started a decade of change across the Australian Antarctic programme.

The move coincided with the establishment in Hobart of the headquarters for the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The AAD's involvement in CCAMLR drove an increasing capability in marine research, culminating in today's Southern Ocean Ecosystems programme. Our first major marine science voyage – the First International BIOMASS Experiment – in 1981, marked the first time Australia had embarked on distant-water deep-sea research since Douglas Mawson's 1929-1931 expedition. The significant refit of the *Nella Dan*, necessary for the voyage, was pivotal to the development of marine science within the AAD, and demonstrated our commitment to providing data for the management of living resources in the Southern Ocean.

After the scuttling of the *Nella Dan* at Macquarie Island in 1987, marine science voyages continued on the purpose-built *Aurora Australis*. These included a series of cooperative ventures with oceanographers and other scientists from CSIRO, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Cooperative Research Centre (established in 1991), and later the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems CRC, providing data on sea ice, ocean currents,

climate change and marine resources. In March this year the AAD completed an assessment of krill distribution and abundance in the vast CCAMLR management area (Division 58.4.1), surveying over 1 million km<sup>2</sup> of ocean between 30° and 80° east. The voyage completes a dataset stretching around one third of the Antarctic coast.

Leaving aside marine science, since arriving in Tasmania the AAD has pursued and supported research into plant, animal and microbial biology and ecology, geology, geophysics, glaciology, human impacts, human biology and medicine, meteorology, and space and atmospheric science. Our efforts have helped encourage other elements of the global Antarctic effort, such as the headquarters of the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs, and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, to establish in Hobart.

The past 25 years have seen significant changes and improvements in the way we operate in Antarctica and support our scientists. In 1981 Prince Charles spoke with Antarctic stations on a high frequency radio schedule. Today he would have the choice of satellite-based phone, email, internet or fax. Intelsat geostationary satellites and mobile satellite systems let us communicate with ships at sea or with scientists in deep field, and send and receive large amounts of scientific data, medical X-rays and digital images, on a 24-hour basis.

Our rebuilding programme, which ran for over a decade, provided Antarctic expeditioners with modern living and working conditions. Over the years our buildings have become more energy efficient, with better construction materials, a Building Monitoring Control System that precisely controls energy usage, and the installation of wind turbines at Mawson in 2003.

Scientists participating in the First International BIOMASS Experiment in 1981, on board the *Nella Dan*.



DICK WILLIAMS



The quarter century has seen the introduction of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft for deep field support. For almost 40 years, huskies were used to explore otherwise inaccessible parts of the Australian Antarctic Territory. Their departure in 1993, as a result of the 1991 Environmental Protocol, saw vehicles and aircraft take over this role. Our CASA 212-400 aircraft now provide logistic and scientific capacity between stations and into the field.

We are proud of our contribution to Hobart and the state of Tasmania. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Hobart welcomed and supported a large number of Antarctic pioneers, including Dumont d'Urville, James Clark Ross, Roald Amundsen and Douglas Mawson. For some 50 years, however, the city was passed over in favour of other ports. That all changed in 1981. Hobart has since played host to hundreds of Antarctic research and tourist ships from many nations, and employs some 800 people in Antarctic-related activities.

The importance of Hobart as an Antarctic gateway will escalate this summer with the commencement of trial flights of a jet aircraft between Hobart and Antarctica. In our 25th anniversary year here, it is fitting that the AAD is again embarking on a venture that promises significant changes in the way we plan for expeditions, conduct science and operate in Antarctica.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Australian Antarctic Magazine*, celebrating 25 years of service and Antarctic endeavour in Hobart. While it is impossible to capture 25 years in 36 pages, this edition provides a snapshot of some of our major achievements. It also points towards some of the challenges that await us and, in our historical section, reflects on such pioneering spirits as Douglas Mawson and Alf Howard, who helped lay the groundwork for today's successful, modern Antarctic programme.

*Tony Press*

—TONY PRESS  
Director, AAD

The AAD headquarters was located at 568 St Kilda Road, Melbourne from 1963 until 1981.

