

## *Cold, dark and festive* **Celebrating Midwinter in Tasmania**

Last year's acclaimed Antarctic Tasmania Midwinter Festival – the third and the biggest so far – drew more than 35,000 people to 119 separate events at 19 locations around Tasmania. Judging by the huge turnout and the enthusiastic participation of organisers and audiences, Tasmanians and visitors alike are eager to celebrate Tasmania's unique connections with Antarctica!

The Midwinter Festival aims to educate, inform, inspire and celebrate the Tasmanian community's involvement with Antarctica and Australia's leading role in Antarctic science and policy. Importantly, festival events are hosted by the local Antarctic community and individuals and organisations again contributed generously to this year's program. Seed funding was provided by the Tasmanian Government, and the festival also attracted 34 corporate sponsors and partners who donated cash and in-kind support. With the active support of icon institutions like the Australian Antarctic Division, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, Screen Tasmania, the Tasmanian

Symphony Orchestra and P&O Polar, the festival reached a huge new audience. Festival Director Paul Cullen did a tremendous job again last year in coordinating the efforts of the Antarctic community and more than 150 festival volunteers generously gave their time and expertise.

Some of the many highlights last year included 'Expedition South', a concert of Antarctic music performed by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and set to spectacular images of Antarctica. This concert also featured a moving tribute to the late Antarctic photographer Wayne Papps. Exhibitions and events at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens boasted record attendances while many screenings at 'The Longest Night Film Festival' were sold out. Also resoundingly successful were the RSV *Aurora Australis* open day, the Australian Antarctic Division's air-sea rescue demonstration and the re-enactment of Amundsen's husky team racing Scott to the South Pole. The second Phillip Law Lecture was delivered by former Science Minister Dr Barry Jones. Other highlights included the 'Science on Sunday' display at the Hotel

Grand Chancellor, photographic exhibitions, the Antarctic Tasmania Midwinter dinner, and the Hobart City Council's 'Cold Fingers' music events.

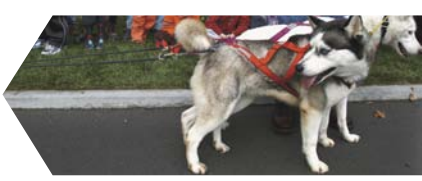
The festival was an unquestioned success from the first Sunday, when more than 900 people attended a one-day science expo hosted by the Australian Antarctic Division at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, to the last, when more than 3500 people watched a team of huskies race around the Botanical Gardens. During the days in between, 1800 students from around Tasmania descended on Salamanca Square for the 'Antarctic Discovery Days'.

In all respects, the Midwinter Festival has grown in popularity and scope from the inaugural event in 2002, and this year's Midwinter Festival – scheduled for 18-27 June 2004 – promises to be even bigger and better.

*Ben Galbraith,*  
Antarctic Tasmania



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**“The students are tuned-in, enthusiastic and talking of a future that involves their own participation in Antarctica.”**

## COMMENTS

### TEACHERS' COMMENTS ABOUT SCHOOL DISCOVERY DAYS

The festival's brought people outside in winter! Great entertainment, and it highlights the connection between Antarctica and Australia

#### A great learning hands on experience for children and adults about Tasmania's special relationship with Antarctica

A wonderful festival – vastly different to any other festival in Tasmania or Australia

A great way of letting the community know what's happening in Antarctica

*My students came back to school enthralled by the Antarctic experience...the work we have continued with in the classroom has astounded us! Would we do it again? You betcha!!*

Stephanie Hickey, Grade 5/6 Springfield Gardens Primary

*All my students now want jobs that will allow them to travel to Antarctica on the Aurora Australis (despite the stories that they were told!!!).*

Debbie Doyle, St Patrick's College, Launceston

*I feel that I could have spent 6 months of research and weeks of planning & I still would not have got across as much information as the children received last week.*

Mary Hemming, Grade 6, St Cuthbert's School



Photographer Chris Crerar