A new era for Antarctic cooperative research

In December we were all thrilled to find out that the Cooperative Research Centre for Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems (ACE CRC) had been granted seven years of funding to build upon the work carried out by the current Antarctic CRC.

The Cooperative Research Centres, generally known as CRCs, bring together researchers from universities, CSIRO and other government laboratories, and private industry or public sector agencies, in long-term collaborative arrangements which support research and development and education activities that achieve real outcomes of national, economic and social significance.

The renewed funding for Antarctic cooperative research is an accolade for the current CRC and also recognition of the evolution of the CRC into ACE and the exciting new research and delivery programs that were proposed. The partners worked hard together to achieve this. The core participants are: Australian Antarctic Division, University of Tasmania, CSIRO (Marine and Atmospheric Research) and the Bureau of Meteorology. Supporting partners include three international polar and marine science agencies, Australian Greenhouse Office, Australian National University, Tasmanian Department of Economic Development and Silicon Graphics International.

The new ACE CRC has refocused its programs based on the input from the users of the research. One particular change of emphasis will be that the research will be directed at producing outcomes rather than just outputs. That is to say the researchers will work with end-users, such as the Australian Greenhouse Office, to shape the research to deliver tangible benefits to the user.

The scientific research programs that the new Centre will carry out are primarily in climate and oceanographic research and the interaction of these with biological productivity. Specifically they are:

- Climate Variability and Change
- Antarctic Marine Ecosystems
- Ocean Control of Carbon Dioxide and
- Sea Level Rise

Each program has several different projects to achieve its outcomes.

From these scientific efforts will emerge new understanding of the forces that have shaped the Antarctic, Australian and global environment. We will also gain new capacities to predict changes and to incorporate this understanding into the national effort to develop sustainable management of our environmental, economic, and social resources.

In addition there will be a strong education program, with many PhD students carrying out their research within the CRC. One of the goals of the CRC program is to improve the training of researchers and give them a broad range of skills. ACE CRC has a range of extra training programs that will make life as an ACE PhD student both much more fun and challenging as well as being much more valuable to the student in terms of a broad training.

It's exciting times for Antarctic research. The Centre has been funded to an even greater level than before. The users are directly involved in defining the research needs and the spirit of collaboration is very high. The new CRC for Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems is poised to have a major impact on Australian (and international) understanding of the importance to global climate of the Southern Ocean and to understanding how natural variability of the Southern Ocean influences ecosystems. In these days of conflicting opinions about the state of the world's climate and oceans, the results from the ACE CRC research will provide some sound data on which to base future understandings and shape future policies for the good of Australia and the planet.

WAYNE PAPPS

Katherine Woodthorpe, Chair of the Cooperative Research Centre for Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems

KATHERINE WOODTHORPE, CHAIR, ACE CRC

FRED KOOLHOFF

The Board of the Cooperative Research Centre for Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems. Back (left to right): Bill Trestrail (Director, Silicon Graphics International, SGI Inc.), Tony Haymet (CEO, CSIRO Marine Research), Howard Bamsey (CEO, Australian Greenhouse Office, AGO), John Fisher (Representing Tasmanian Department Economic Development), Michael Stoddart (Chief Scientist, AAD). Front (left to right): Tony Press (Director, AAD), Katherine Woodthorpe (Chair, ACE), Andrew Glenn (Pro Vice Chancellor of Research, University of Tasmania), Bill Downey (Deputy Director, Bureau of Meteorology).
Note: The Tasmanian Government board position has now been taken by Greg Johannes (Director, Antarctic Tasmania).