

# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## Airlink: runway construction trials this season

Australia's Casey station will be the centre of field work to provide the basis for full runway construction in 2003–04 (subject to environmental and other regulatory approvals) for a new Australia–Antarctica air link. The field program includes confirmation of a runway site, preliminary construction trials and establishment of additional automatic weather stations.

The project is designed to provide much greater flexibility in deploying scientists and support people in Antarctica. Up to 25 planned flights are planned each summer, using a 16-seat Dassault Falcon 900EX wide body passenger jet, between Hobart and a compacted snow runway near Casey.

Designed to complement the long haul sea voyages to Antarctica, the jet flights would enable direct return travel between Hobart and Casey. If prevented from landing at Casey by weather or other factors, the long-range jet can return to Australia without landing, reducing the need for refuelling in the sensitive Antarctic environment, minimising the potential for fuel spills, and increasing passenger safety.

Recent Australian work has included meetings between the Australian Antarctic Division, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Civil Aviation Authority and the preferred supplier of the air service, SkyTraders. SkyTraders has been pleasantly surprised by the level of interest by other nations in the proposed service, raising the potential for

cost-sharing by extending access to the flights to other national science programs.

A September 2002 stakeholders' workshop at the Australian Antarctic Division headquarters at Kingston to refine the proposal was attended by George Blaisdell, a world expert in ice runway construction from

the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory in the United States. ■

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### Flying around Antarctica



Once passengers arrive at the Casey runway, those bound for other Antarctic stations and remote destinations would change to CASA 212 twin turbo-prop aircraft fitted with both skis and wheels. The capability offered by these aircraft provides further exciting new opportunities for the conduct of field science. In addition to moving scientists between stations, the C212 can move 2,000 kg of cargo up to 1,400 km. For aerial surveying the aircraft's range extends to 2,500 km.

Dimensions		
Length	16.15 m	53 ft
Wing Span	20.27 m	63 ft, 6 in
Cabin Length	6.55 m	21 ft, 6 in
Cabin Height	1.80 m	5 ft, 11 in
Cabin Width	2.10 m	6 ft, 11 in
Weights		
Maximum Take-Off Weight	8,100 kg	17,857 lb
Maximum Landing Weight	8,100 kg	17,857 lb
Maximum Payload	2,950 kg	6,503 lb
Maximum Fuel	2,000 l	528 US Gall
Maximum Fuel (with underwing tanks)	3,000 l	792 US Gall
Number of Fully Equipped Expeditioners	16	
Performance		
Maximum Speed	360 km/h	195 ktas
Take-Off Distance to 50 ft (S/L, ISA, MTOW)	402 m	1,318 ft
Landing Distance from 50 ft (S/L, ISA, MTOW)	273 m	895 ft
Maximum Range (with external fuel tanks)	2,550 km	1,375 nm
Range with 2,000 kg payload (4,400 lb)	1,522 km	822 nm