



DOUG THOST

FROM HOBART TO ANTARCTICA AND BACK AGAIN

The Sea and Air Operations team has an exhaustive schedule ahead, during the International Polar Year.

Fast forward to October 2007, and the *Aurora Australis* is on its way back to Hobart at the end of a sea ice research voyage, undertaken as part of the International Polar Year (IPY). The ship will need to offload the marine scientists and their samples before loading the cargo, fuel and expeditioners for the next voyage to re-supply Casey and Davis stations. There is much to do while the ship is in port.

First up is to ensure that TASPOTS has obtained suitable berths for the ship. The ship will need to move at least three times in four days. Each time it becomes a pawn in the movements of the small but busy Hobart port. There are so many variables: the ship can't pass under the Tasman Bridge during rush hour; cruise ships get priority; some captains need tugs to get away from the wharf, others don't; and so it goes. The shipping agent will help navigate the berthing maze and will book the ship at the fuelling berth further up river. The next voyage will be delivering bulk fuel to Davis, and loading all that fuel takes time.

Due to the two long IPY marine science voyages this season, there will only be two voyages to the continental stations. Rather than making things easier, it puts a lot of pressure on the existing voyages. We will need to make sure that every bunk is taken and every piece of cargo space is utilised. Shipping remains one part of

a complex equation of Antarctic logistics which encompasses station capacity, engineering capacity and aircraft. A good deal of planning will be required to integrate all these elements.

The new Voyage Leader and Deputy Voyage Leader need to be briefed – the resupply team will need to make sure the ship is back in Hobart at as close to the scheduled time as possible, to start the next IPY voyage on time. This will be a combined voyage for two IPY marine science programs, the Collaborative East Antarctic Marine Census (CEMARC) and Climate of Antarctica and Southern Ocean (CASO). Our returning Voyage Leaders must also be debriefed.

New TASPOTS security and safety procedures mean that marine scientists and others wanting to work on the ship while it's in port will need to undergo a safety induction. The new rules also mean that getting friends and family in to say goodbye is more difficult than it used to be.

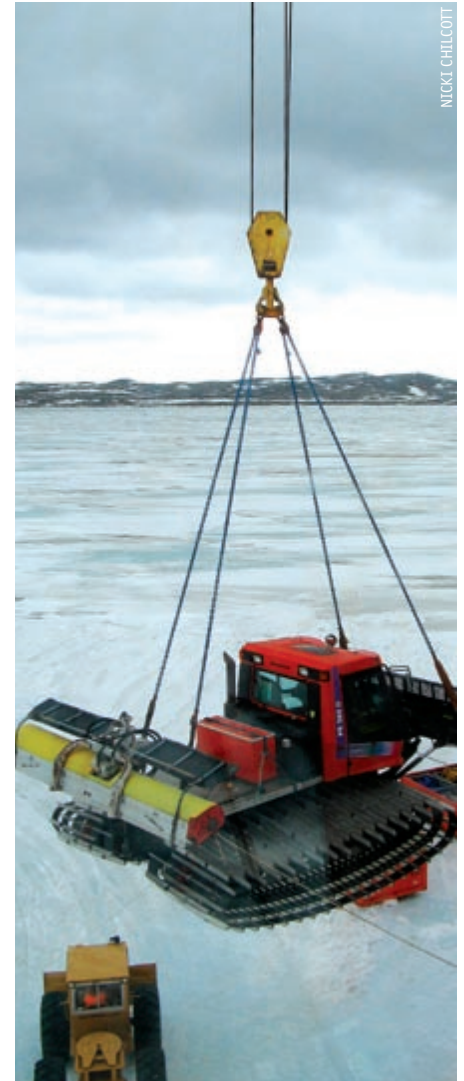


NICKI CHILCOTT



NICKI CHILCOTT

TOP: Marine science cargo awaits loading on to the ship. BOTTOM: Quarantine inspectors and their dogs monitor cargo and personal possessions for plant and animal matter that could pose a hazard to the Antarctic environment.



NICKI CHILCOTT

Large and oddly shaped cargo, such as this Kässbohrer snow grooming machine being unloaded from the ship in Antarctica, can cause headaches for the cargo facility supervisor.

Repair and maintenance of the ship is critical. The crew can repair most things at sea but there are a number of repairs that are best done when she's alongside. Scheduling these in advance makes things flow more smoothly.

The science technical support section will focus on the laboratories and other scientific equipment on the ship. While the first marine science voyage is nearly over, the combined (and hence complex) CEMARC/CASO voyage is coming up quickly, and it will be critical to have all the ship's science equipment in working order. Sounds simple enough, but there could be conflicts with the loading, maintenance and other activities scheduled over the hectic few days.

The scientific samples on the returning voyage need special attention. Once they've been cleared for import by the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) they need to be stored

and transported in the right conditions to preserve them for future analysis.

The cargo facility supervisor needs to develop a loading plan for the upcoming voyage, task the stevedores who load the ship, and schedule their shifts to get the ship loaded in the most efficient way possible. Cargo will be a bit of a headache. There is still a lot of big equipment to go to the new runway at Wilkins and some of it is oddly shaped. This makes the loading jigsaw even harder. Even though the voyage is less than a week away, some of the cargo is still to arrive and some of it won't be ready at all in time to get on the ship.

From an Australian Customs Service point of view there is no difference between exporting to Antigua and Antarctica, so all export items need to be declared through a comprehensive manifest process. Additionally there is the understanding

the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) has with AQIS that they will monitor our southbound cargo for potential introductions of alien species to the pristine Antarctic environment.

There are other things too. Organising passport and duty-free checks, helping expeditioners from overseas, briefing and debriefing ship's captains, last minute briefings for departing expeditioners... the list goes on.

There is always a lot going on when the ship is in port, IPY or not. Some things won't run to plan, something is bound to take longer or shorter than expected, and every change will affect at least two of the agencies involved. Fortunately, the AAD team enjoy the challenges of working in such a flexible environment, where no two days are ever the same.

David Tonna
Sea and Air Operations, AAD