Diversity and inclusion in the Australian Antarctic program

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**Information Paper submitted by Australia**

Summary

The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) is committed to increasing diversity across all aspects of the Australian Antarctic Program (AAP) and ensuring that all employees and expeditioners feel welcome and respected. To this effect, a range of initiatives have been delivered over recent years, with work in this space continuing as a priority.

Background

The AAD as the Governmental organisation coordinating and delivering the AAP is responsible for a large community of employees and Antarctic expeditioners. The AAP brings together people from a wide range of Australian and international organisations. People are located at head office, on Antarctic research stations, in the field and on Australian Antarctic vessels. As with other Antarctic programs, our Antarctic workplaces are also personal, living and social places. The AAD seeks to ensure that all employees and expeditioners are safe, welcome and respected, and free from any discrimination, and is committed to increasing diversity across all aspects of the AAP. The AAD has implemented a range of initiatives to support this commitment, outlined below.

* The establishment of an AAD inclusion, diversity and gender equity working group to promote equity, diversity, inclusion and respect across the AAD and AAP.
* Engagement of a professor from the University of Tasmania to undertake research into barriers and challenges for women in the AAP.
  + The AAD is now focusing on addressing the findings of this research and recommendations.
* A review of the AAD’s Expeditioner Personal Qualities (which underpin recruitment and performance activities) to ensure that we are selecting people into the AAP that share our values.
  + The new Personal Qualities were introduced in 2021 and are the focus of our current recruitment and selection campaign, and the redesign of our performance reporting framework.
* An increased focus on diversity and inclusion across the AAD’s recruitment activities including imagery, social media activity and targeted advertising focussed on underrepresented groups.
  + Diversity has also been a focus for our broader social media presence.
* Introduction of new lines of clothing and equipment in women’s sizes and designed to accommodate women’s needs in field environments.
* Promoting inclusion through our AAD/AAP seminar series topics and speakers, and addition of preferred gender pronouns to signature blocks.
* Celebrating international days of recognition including International Women’s Day (IWD), International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) across the AAD and AAP.

Alongside these initiatives, a range of resources have been rolled out across the Program including ensuring participants in the AAP understand behavioural expectations and are appropriately equipped to respond to inappropriate behaviour through activities such as:

* Introduction of Bystander training for all expeditioners (as well as head office staff)
* Pre-departure briefings for expeditioners, focussed on behavioural expectations and increasing awareness about organisational resources and pathways for reporting inappropriate behaviour.

Additionally, recent updates to our AAP Field Manual now address gender specific issues including menstruation, as well as sexual harassment and assault.

In 2021 a cultural change program was commenced for the AAD, drawing on an external specialist cultural consulting organisation as a delivery partner. This is on ongoing program to improve behaviour, communication, diversity and application of our core values across both head office and on station. A new Alcohol and Drug policy for the AAP has been adopted, with a focus on ensuring a positive and welcoming culture on our stations.

In future actions, the AAD is in the initial stages of engaging a Diversity and Inclusion specialist to work with us to develop a deliver a diversity and inclusion action plan this year. This work will be aligned with our Department’s diversity and inclusion strategy and associated action plans.