



MEDIA RELEASE | AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC PROGRAM | 21 NOVEMBER 2019

Australia to support French Antarctic program following damage to icebreaker L’Astrolabe

The Australian Antarctic Division will provide logistical support to the French Antarctic program, managed by the French Polar Institute, following damage to its icebreaker L’Astrolabe.

IPEV has requested Australian assistance to resupply their Antarctic station Dumont d’Urville and the French-Italian station Concordia, as well as transfer expeditioners and cargo.

Australian Antarctic Division Director Mr Kim Ellis said Australia has a very close collaborative relationship with the French program and is pleased to be able to offer assistance.

“There is a great spirit of co-operation and support among the nations working in Antarctica and we are very happy we can help our French colleagues when needed,” Mr Ellis said.

Director of the French Polar Institute Mr Jerome Chappellaz said the logistical support from the Australians, at short notice, has saved their Antarctic summer field campaign.

“Without the support of the Australian Antarctic Division, keeping our research stations running and undertaking scientific research would have been extremely difficult,” Mr Chappellaz said.

The Australian Antarctic Division will provide both shipping and aviation support to the French Program.

Australia’s icebreaker RSV *Aurora Australis* will transport expeditioners, cargo and around 250,000 litres of fuel to Dumont d’Urville and Concordia.

The AAD was already scheduled to carry some French expeditioners on its A319 Antarctic flights and it is likely these passenger numbers will increase.

The *Aurora Australis* is currently enroute to Hobart, and is expected to arrive at the end of this month – a few days earlier than scheduled.

The Australian icebreaker will then depart early December for a planned voyage to Macquarie Island, and continue on to Dumont d’Urville.

The *Aurora Australis* will return to Hobart for the scheduled resupply voyage to Casey research station in late December.

Mr Ellis said assisting the French will result in some changes to the Australian Antarctic Program shipping schedule.

“While the fine details are still being worked out, we always allow for contingencies in our summer season, so we don’t expect a significant impact on the season or projects.”

The French Polar Institute will work to reorganise its summer season to ensure it can achieve as many scientific projects as possible.



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy
Australian Antarctic Division

Background

L'Astrolabe is a French icebreaker used to bring personnel and supplies to the Dumont d'Urville station and to the French-Italian station Concordia, in Antarctica. It operates from Hobart during the Antarctic summer season.

The vessel is jointly owned and operated by the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF) administration, the French Polar Institute (IPEV) and the French Navy.

Pictures and vision: <https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/cCKWSrbDuih8Vlz>

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