



National President's Forum
Australia and Antarctica: National and International Interest

Outcomes Report

This report summarises the main outcomes of the National President's Forum hosted by the Australian Institute of International Affairs held in Hobart on 23 October 2009.

The Forum brought together government officials, academics, journalists and other experts to discuss Antarctica, with a focus on Australia's interests in and around the continent, past actions and future policy directions. The efficacy of the Antarctic Treaty System and Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings was also discussed, along with proposals to improve the Treaty System. The Forum was preceded by a public lecture on *Reflections on the Governance of Antarctica* by Mr Jan Huber, retiring Executive Secretary of the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat.

Highlights of the Forum included:

- Participation by over 20 experts on Antarctic issues
- Involvement of four key government departments, two international organisations and media
- Lively opening addresses followed by an emphasis on open discussion
- Preparation of a Rapporteur's Report by Professor Emeritus Peter Boyce AO
- Distribution of reports and recommendations to relevant policy-makers



National President's Forum
Long Room, Parliament House, Tasmania
23 October 2009



Objectives

The National President's Forum is one of the AIIA's most prestigious events, bringing together a select group of scholars, government officials and local experts for invitation-only Chatham House discussion.

Specific objectives included:

- To deepen understanding of the Antarctic Treaty System
- To consider Australia's Antarctic interests, now and for the future
- To enable participants to engage in dynamic discussion about Antarctic challenges
- To produce solid policy recommendations for Australia's future Antarctic policy

Prior to the Forum at Parliament House, the AIIA organised a public lecture at the University of Tasmania by retiring Executive Secretary of the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat Jan Huber on *Reflections on the Governance of Antarctica*. This aimed to take discussions to a wider audience.



Retiring Executive Secretary of the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat Mr Jan Huber giving a public lecture at the University of Tasmania

Participants

Speakers and discussants came from a variety of organisations that included:

- International Organisations:
 - Antarctic Treaty Secretariat
 - Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
- Government:
 - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
 - Australian Antarctic Division
 - Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (TAS)
 - Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts (TAS)
- Academic Institutions:
 - Australian National University
 - University of Tasmania
 - University of Sydney
- Other Institutes and Organisations:
 - Australian Strategic Policy Institute
 - Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre



Format

The Forum was divided into four sessions and each session had an opening address that lasted for 10-15 minutes. Afterward participants discussed the topic controlled by moderator for approximately 60 minutes.

The four sessions were:

- The Antarctic Treaty System
- Australia's Antarctic Interests
- Antarctic Controversies
- Australia's Antarctic Future

The discussion was conducted under Chatham House Rule to enable a frank discussion.

Feedback from Participants

Feedback from participants indicated that the Forum was a great success, with the overall quality scoring an average of 4.33 out of 5. When the aspects of the Forum were broken down, the quality of discussion scored particularly highly at 4.4 out of 5. Indeed, a third of respondents wrote that the quality of discussion was the highlight of the Forum.

Participants noted the following as some of the highpoints of the Forum:

“spirited debate from an extraordinarily expert group”

“access to all the key stakeholders”

“the chance to hear a high quality discussion by knowledgeable people”

“having so many international affairs practitioners and luminaries in one place focussed on only one professional issue”

Participants noted the following impacts the Forum had on their understanding of Antarctic issues:

“good understanding on the perspectives of others”

“broadened my appreciation of Australia's role”

“better understanding of what is occurring within the government on Antarctica”

“it has rounded out gaps in my knowledge of the ATS and Australia's interests”

Outcomes and Recommendations

The NPF produced a number of recommendations for Australian Policy on Antarctica. A Rapporteur's Report was prepared by Emeritus Professor Peter Boyce AO.

The Rapporteur's Report has been distributed to participants and key decision-makers and posted on the AIIA's website: www.aiia.asn.au



Acknowledgements

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- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Parliament House, Tasmania
- The University of Tasmania

The Australian Institute of International Affairs would like to thank all participants in the Forum, particularly speakers, moderators, chairs and the Rapporteur.

The organising Sub-Committee was comprised of:

- Mr Clive Hildebrand, National President
- Ms Melissa Conley Tyler, National Executive Director
- Mr Geoffrey Miller AO, National Vice President
- Mr Matt Sussex, President, Tasmania Branch
- Mr Ian Dudgeon RFD, President, ACT Branch

This event would not have been possible without the dedication of the following:

- Mr John Robbins, National Deputy Director
- Ms Hannah Richardson, National Office Intern
- Ms Melanie Parker, National Office Intern
- Mr Oliver Haardt, National Office Intern

