

Summary report

AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Connecting Australia's polar research community in a rapidly changing world



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Conference design

A collaborative national meeting such as the [Australian Antarctic Research Conference](#) was a recommendation of the Australian Antarctic Science Council (AASC). The overarching theme of the meeting from 19-22 November 2024 was “Connecting Australia's polar research community in a rapidly changing world.”

The conference was hosted by the University of Tasmania and jointly sponsored by the Australian Antarctic Program Partnership (AAPP), the ARC Australian Centre for Excellence in Antarctic Science (ACEAS), Securing Antarctica's Environmental Future (SAEF) and the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD).

Conference organisation was led by a multi-agency [Steering Committee](#) (which set the scientific agenda and reviewed submissions) and coordinated by a local Organising Committee comprising AAPP staff, ACEAS staff and UTAS researchers. Leishman Associates was engaged as conference organisers to handle registrations, abstract submission and website/app development. 11 updates from the Steering Committee were sent over six months to a mailing list of more than 1000 people.

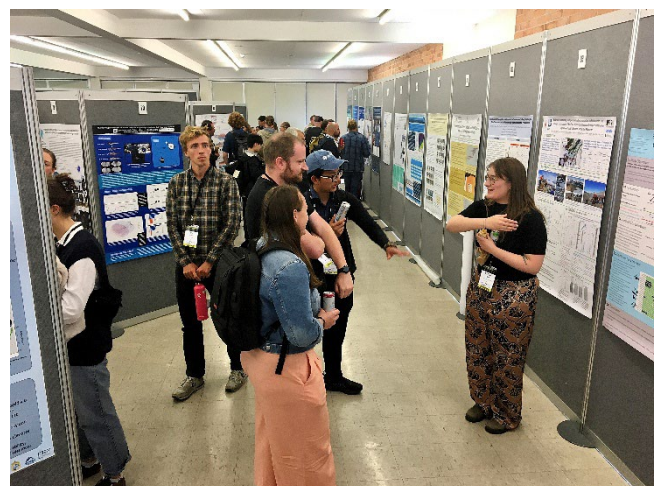
The overall cost of the conference was \$160,000. Full registration cost \$300, day registration \$100, and virtual registration (for plenary sessions only) \$150. Registration costs for people affiliated with ACEAS, AAD, SAEF or AAPP were borne by the four sponsoring partner organisations to underwrite the conference.

The conference was run as a whole-of-community in-person event. Talks were given in plenary sessions (i.e. no parallel sessions) with session programs designed to cut across multiple disciplines. Most of the research presentations were given through interactive poster sessions.

The plan is to make this an ongoing conference series.

Themes included:

- *Antarctica in a changing climate and Earth system*
- *Antarctic extremes and beyond*
- *Antarctica's past*
- *The human dimension of Antarctica*
- *Regime shifts and tipping points in the Antarctic system*
- *Antarctica's future: Research directions in the global context*





Conference registrations totalled 460:

- 170 Early Career Researchers (ECRs) registered for the ECR professional development day preceding the conference (18 November).
- 53 ten-minute talks (35 by female researchers and 27 by ECRs).
- 222 presentations given as posters, with 50 of these also highlighted through lightning talks.
- 25 side-events for more in-depth discussions between groups of researchers during the meeting. By necessity, these were parallel sessions.

The conference received a very high number of submissions¹:

- 380 abstracts were submitted from 335 individual lead authors.
- Of these individuals, 69% were early career researchers.

¹ Thanks to Nerilie Abram for compiling these data

- 78% of the individuals who led abstract submissions were based in Australian universities, 17% based in Australian government institutions, and 5% from international universities, industry or are independent researchers.
- In terms of University-led large-scale research Centres: 27% of individuals from ACEAS, 20% from SAEF and 19% from AAPP.
- 132 submissions from people with UTAS as primary affiliation (followed by Monash 33, ANU 23, UoW 14, UNSW 12, QUT 11, UMelb 8, UAdel 7, UCanb 6, UQ 4, UWA 3, JCU 2, UTS 1, USC 1, Newcastle 1, Macquarie 1)



The conference also featured:

- a well-attended **science comedy night** for the public, featuring presentations from six conference participants, a collaboration between AAPP and Future Science Talks;
- an **Antarctic women's networking event**, supported by Antarctic Tasmania (Department of State Growth) and the City of Hobart;
- six tours of **national icebreaker RSV Nuyina** for a total of 180 conference attendees, supported by TasPorts and AAD.

Tasmanian Federal MPs and Senators were invited to attend. The Governor-General, Prime Minister, Federal Environment Minister, and Chair of the Climate Change Authority were invited to open the conference. However, these invitations could not be accepted due to Parliament sitting that week and other engagements. The

Governor-General and Environment Minister sent welcome messages on video, and the conference was opened by the UTAS Vice-Chancellor.

Survey feedback

Responses to a post-conference survey were received from over 20% of the conference attendees:

- 73% thought the conference themes were highly relevant
- 97% said the conference was value-for-money
- 63% support a biennial conference, 79% in Hobart
- 95% said pre-conference communication was good or excellent

	Poor	Good	Excellent
Program content in general	2.11%	45.26%	52.63%
Program structure in general	12%	52.17%	39.13%
Level of diversity in the program	7.69%	54.95%	37.36%
Overall quality of lightning talk presentations	1.08%	36.56%	62.37%
Overall quality of poster presentations	1.08%	46.24%	52.69%
Overall quality of the side events	2.53%	55.70%	41.77%
Suitability of the venues	2.13%	60.64%	37.23%
Suitability of the 'single plenary' model	10.71%	51.19%	38.10%

Sponsors and supporters

- University of Tasmania (venues and support staff including AV/IT support, cleaning services and security staff)
- Tasmanian Polar Network (welcome reception)
- Antarctic Tasmania, Dept State Growth (student registration scholarships, welcome reception, women's networking event, ECR day)
- Business Events Tasmania (seed funding)

- TasPorts (bus for *Nuyina* tours)
- Echoview (poster prizes)
- William Adams (lightning talk prizes)
- City of Hobart (women's networking event)

Media coverage

UTAS issued two media releases, [before the conference](#) and a [statement from early-career researchers](#) at its conclusion. The end-of-conference presentation to local journalists was led by early-career researchers.

These initiatives helped to generate extensive coverage during the conference and for weeks afterwards:

- 3 newspaper articles (see [Mercury](#))
- 9 radio reports and interviews (including national ABC news bulletins)
- 6 TV reports (including national ABC news)
- 16 online articles
- 1 magazine article (see [New Scientist](#))



Two editions of AAPP's quarterly science newsletters, *Southern Signals* (sent to a national and international audience of around 1800) featured the conference in [October](#) and [December](#).

The future

The success of this meeting shows that:

- There is strong demand for a national Antarctic research conference.
- The research community supports an ongoing conference series, with a frequency of every second year.

The key to future success is an organisational structure that is committed to its delivery. Thank you to the four organisations that drove the 2024 conference, and to the AASC for proposing the initiative.