

MEDIA RELEASE



MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP

18 May 2018

LEADING THE WAY BY BUILDING ANTARCTICA'S FIRST PAVED RUNWAY

In a boost to Australia's Antarctic Program, the Turnbull Government has announced its intention to construct a paved runway near Davis research station.

Access to Antarctica in winter is difficult and rare, with temperatures dropping to minus 40°C at Davis station. The new runway will complement Australia's existing summer-only ice runway at Wilkins Aerodrome, and will provide more reliable access to Antarctica throughout the year, improving our ability to conduct year-round, world-class scientific research and respond to emergencies.

The establishment of the permanent link between Hobart and Antarctica will enhance Hobart's role as a gateway to East Antarctica, making it a more attractive destination for Antarctic nations to base their operations in Tasmania.

As a leader in Antarctica, Australia is committed to best practice environmental stewardship and the project will be subject to extensive environmental and other government approval processes. These assessments will be transparent, consultative and rigorous, including to meet the requirements of the *Antarctic Treaty (Environment Protection) Act 1980* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Today's announcement, together with the \$1.9 billion icebreaker RSV Nuyina and the new Antarctic science funding model announced in this year's Budget, is part of the Turnbull Government's commitment to a new era of Antarctic endeavour and underpins our long term interests in the region.

Investigations into year-round aviation access started in 2016 as a key component of the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan. The Government provided \$10 million to scope options and undertake preliminary site investigations, with the cost of the new runway to now be determined through a detailed business case.

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Antarctica is a unique place and has a special significance for Australians. We have a proud legacy of Australian Antarctic leadership and science – from the heroic era of Sir Douglas Mawson through to our modern expeditioners.

Australia is a strong supporter of the Antarctic Treaty System and the runway will support our international partnerships.

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