



A bit of History around the TPN

Tasmania is an island state with strong geographical, biological, geological and historical links to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

The island was home to a major whaling and sealing industry that started in the early part of the 19th century. Tasmania's historical connection with the southern continent began when James Cook landed over 200 years ago. In more recent times, Tasmania hosted and has been the departure and return point for innumerable expeditioners to the Continent.

Hobart, Tasmania's capital, has a number of major advantages in the field of Antarctic science and logistics. It is one of the world's largest centres for education and research in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science. Its institutions incorporate the Australian Antarctic Division, the Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies, the Co-operative Research Centre for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Environment, the CSIRO's Division of Marine Research and the Bureau of Meteorology, Antarctic Section. Organisations supporting Antarctic research, conservation and logistics also located in Hobart are the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs and Antarctic Adventure an edu/tainment centre based on Antarctic themes.

Hobart is a place of stable government, with co-operative port and local authorities. The harbour and city are safe and the port is virtually free from industrial disputation.

These attributes provided the Tasmanian Government with the incentive to develop its physical and financial association with Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. The initiative culminated with the 1993 establishment of the Tasmanian Government's Office of Antarctic Affairs and the Tasmanian Polar Network.

A number of Government-sponsored committees associated with Antarctica had existed before the TPN came into being. The precursor to the TPN was the Antarctic Advisory Committee. This Committee predominantly brought together members of the public sector and private industry engaged in resupply. To a degree this committee was accused by some of its members to be too involved in discussion with little following action.

To overcome this problem it was agreed in June 1993 to establish another entity consisting of representatives from private enterprise, the University of Tasmania, the Australian Antarctic Division and other relevant federal and state public sector bodies. The original goal of the group was to consider ways and means of becoming known on the world's polar stage.

This decision led to the group needing an identity. Reflecting on its ambition to be relevant to both polar areas rather than to the Antarctic alone, members accepted a name, suggested by Malcom Wallhead, and the Tasmanian Polar Network (TPN) came into being.

At the time all the known, major research, education institutions, government bodies and private industry firms involved in the Antarctic and Antarctic resupply became members of the TPN.

The advantage of the TPN was to provide a value-added service. Value adding came through members organising themselves for the benefit of national and international expeditions. By networking their activities, members were also offering an increased range of services and products to prospective buyers.

The Tasmanian Government originally drove the TPN. Strong bi-partisan, political support and endorsement by the then Minister for Antarctic Affairs, Hon Peter Hodgman, enabled the TPN to produce promotional material and attend the SCAR/COMNAP meeting in Rome (Italy) in 1994. This attendance, along with later promotions at Cambridge (UK) in 1996 and Tokyo (Japan) in 2000, the production of brochures (part sponsored by TPN members) and newsletters was designed to increase recognition of the group and promote the various attributes of its members amongst the international and national Antarctic community.

In addition, the TPN supported the Government's decision to officially recognise Antarctic related visitors to the State and often used these occasions to develop future connections with international expeditions. Members particularly active at this time were Michael Chung of W. Chung Sing & Co. and the Hobart Port's Corporation.

The political bipartisan approach of the Tasmanian Government provided the Governor of the State with the opportunity to promote Tasmania's Antarctic connection and capacity. The availability of the Office of the Governor and Government House for this purpose provided the State's drive for international recognition with significant momentum.

Between 1993 and 1997 the TPN functioned as a loose affiliation of members, drawn together to exchange information and to participate in promotional activities. At the end of that period it had, in conjunction with Government, successfully promoted the State as an Antarctic destination and achieved for the State a reputation for hosting visiting expeditions. A warm welcome was guaranteed when visiting Hobart.

In 1997 the TPN membership agreed the organisation needed to formalise its structure and determine objectives and strategies. It formerly elected a Chairman and Committee, thereby confirming the independence of the organisation. At the same time it was agreed a membership fee would be charged to provide a small measure of operating funds for the organisation. This fee allowed the TPN to develop promotional activities without needing assistance of Government.

To this time the organisation has been primarily engaged in generic promotion and hosting visiting expeditions.

In 1999 the TPN saw the need to incorporate as an organisation. This process provided financial protection to members and at the same time established formal rules of procedure for its operation. It incorporated in January 1999. At the same time it realised it needed to reassess its direction and method of operation.

The process of international promotion and hosting Antarctic visitors to the State had been productive over time. TPN members agreed that these functions continued to have merit and should remain an integral part of the organisations operation.

However, a core of the membership felt that the organisation should also be engaged in activities involved with the longer-term development of polar business in the State. For this reason the organisational goals and objectives of the TPN were re-examined and determined at a search conference of members held in February 1999.

The TPN agreed that increasing the total amount of money spent in Tasmania on goods and services associated with Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic and the Southern Ocean was a worthwhile goal for the organisation.

This decision led to the development of two objectives and a number of strategies. These were:

1. To increase funds spent in Tasmania on supplies and services related to Antarctic and the Southern Ocean

- (a) Co-operate with international governments, the Australian Antarctic Division and other Antarctic institutions to attract additional visits to the State through the medium of an intercontinental air service, ship visits, symposia, meetings and conferences.
- (b) Identify opportunities for applied research that will lead to the development of technology to meet demand created by Antarctic expeditions.
- (c) Maximise international exposure of the State in relevant national and international Antarctic and related forums.
- (d) Develop education and training courses in subjects related to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.
- (e) Promote Hobart and Tasmania's location, historical, geological and biological links with Antarctica to enhance visitor numbers and experiences.
- (f) Improve the TPN home page and develop E-commerce to a maximum possible level.

2. To increase the amount of funds spent on Tasmanian business/activities for supplies and services related to Antarctic and the Southern Ocean

- (a) Improve the communication links between the TPN and the Australian Antarctic Division.
- (b) Improve the communication links between the TPN and the Federal Government.
- (c) Develop elements of the Antarctic infrastructure in Hobart, so it is more relevant to foreseen needs.

The objectives and strategies provide the current development plan for TPN activity into the future. Of predominant interest at the moment is the desire to ensure State industry has the capacity to benefit from the proposed air link between Hobart and Antarctica, should it eventuate.