

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Clearer focus for eyes on the Southern Ocean

Up to 60 international scientists are in Hobart this week for meetings and workshops focusing on implementing an international system for observing environmental change in the Southern Ocean, a region that encompasses Tasmanian waters.

Organised by Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS), the international workshops start tomorrow, June 10, at the Hobart headquarters of the University of Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, and concludes on Friday.

The scientists will be welcomed by Sir Guy Green and Tasmanian Polar Network chair John Brennan, ahead of the workshop that includes presentations by:

- SOOS co-chair Professor Anna Wåhlin from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, on *The Southern Ocean Observing System*
- Dr Jessica Melbourne-Thomas from the Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE-CRC, Australia) on *Assessing ecosystem change in the Southern Ocean*
- Dr Keith Nicholls of the British Antarctic Survey, UK, on *Observing the impact of the ocean on the Antarctic Ice Sheet*
- Dr Sang Hoon Lee from the Korean Polar Research Institute, Korea, on *Five years of KOPRI Amundsen Project*
- Dr Sebastiaan Swart from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), South Africa, on *Observing new time and space scales using fleets of ocean gliders*

SOOS co-chair Professor Anna Wåhlin from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, said that the Southern Ocean is perhaps the most important of Earth's climatological hot-spots.

“It is imperative that we have a detailed and long-term set of observations of the Southern Ocean if we are to understand how the global climate is changing,” she said.

“The Southern Ocean has a powerful influence on the Earth’s climate, but it remains one of the least studied and understood parts of the system.

“We know that the Southern Ocean is warming and acidifying faster than any ocean on the planet, and that the impacts of these changes are likely to be far reaching.”

The Southern Ocean is observed using international efforts, including arrays of drifting, moored and remotely-controlled instruments, satellites, deep-diving seals and ship-based observations.

Their data inform scientists of changes in the Southern Ocean – from climate change to sea-level rise, ice-edge dynamics and the impacts of global change on marine ecosystems.

SOOS is a major international initiative aimed at facilitating and coordinating the efforts of international marine and Antarctic research institutions and organisations in making observations of the Southern Ocean.

The University of Tasmania’s Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies is the core sponsor of this international effort, launched in 2012, and hosts the SOOS International Project Office at its Hobart campus in Battery Point.

The Tasmanian Partnership for Advanced Computing, the Australian Antarctic Division, Antarctic Gateway Partnership and Australia’s Integrated Marine Observing System are four of a number of international sponsors of SOOS.

“The role of SOOS in facilitating the international effort to observe the Southern Ocean is critical,” said SOOS co-chair Professor Oscar Schofield, from Rutgers University, USA.

“The data we require to address key environmental issues is beyond the capacity of single nations to deliver, we must work together to achieve the data coverage required, and SOOS is central to this effort.

“This week of workshops is an important step in designing and implementing an observing system to which all nations can contribute.”

Australia contributes to the international effort to observe the Southern Ocean through the research efforts of many of the institutes and organisations located in Hobart, such as the Australian Antarctic Division, the CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere Flagship, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre, the Integrated Marine Observing System, and more recently through the Australian Research Council’s Antarctic Gateway Partnership Special Research Initiative.

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