

Letter to the Editor

23 January 2014

The *Mercury* is to be congratulated for accurately identifying that Australia's focus to grow the Antarctic sector will depend greatly on building lasting international relationships. As identified in your editorial (*Mercury*, January 19), the visit this past weekend of the Chinese icebreaker Xue Long brought with it the prospect of a new dimension in the developing relationship with China in the Antarctic.

The gains were two-way with benefits for our visitors and the city of Hobart as host. The ship took on fuel and supplies, its crew accessed facilities and attractions in and around Hobart, scientific exchanges were completed and genuine, enduring relationships were established. In a partnership involving all tiers of government and related industry, Tasmania has a competitive advantage to emphasise in its quest to expand relationships where Southern Ocean and Antarctic science is concerned.

We have updated infrastructure (eg the Macquarie Wharf No. 2 Antarctic Logistics and Cruise Terminal), world class scientists and institutions, proven skilled trades across a specialist community, and the geographic location to be a stepping off point to east Antarctica that can grow beyond the present Australian and French expeditions.

The Tasmanian Polar Network is working hard in its partnership with government and industry to bring this quest to fruition. There is more to be done to secure expansion of the sector through international collaboration and local investment, for example ensuring that the Hobart airport runway is upgraded to increase its capacity for Antarctic flights. We are well down the path to a new, exciting future.

Tasmania has the ability to be a global hub of excellence for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean sector.

John Brennan
Chair
Tasmanian Polar Network

m +61 400 478 666
e brennanenvironmental@bigpond.com