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# Media Release

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## ***Aurora Australis 25 years old***

For 25 years, the distinctive orange hulled *Aurora Australis* icebreaker has been a familiar sight for Hobartians, and on Thursday, it will take a well-earned birthday jaunt around the Derwent.

“It’s an iconic ship,” says Tasmanian Polar Network Chair John Brennan. “and is a symbol of Hobart’s special status as an Antarctic gateway. Expeditioners and Tasmanians all have a real affection for her.

The *Aurora Australis* is the first Australian-owned and operated modern ship that has been used by the Australian Antarctic Division. It is Australia’s principal Antarctic research and resupply vessel.

The ship is owned and managed by P&O Maritime who purpose built the 3911 tonne ship in Newcastle, New South Wales. At 94.9 metres long, it has a cruising speed of 13 knots and is capable of breaking ice up to 1.23 metres thick.

The *Aurora Australis* was launched in September 18, 1989 by Hazel Hawke, wife of the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke. At the end of the forthcoming season she will have completed 25 seasons for the Australian Antarctic program. A milestone worth celebrating.

The Managing-Director of P&O Maritime, Mr Rado Antolovic, said *Aurora Australis* has been and continues to be P&O Maritimes flagship vessel. “We are committed to continue providing services to the AAD and being engaged in Antarctic marine services.

“The design has withstood the rigours of the Southern Ocean well. The highest waves and strongest winds in the world are found in the stretch of ocean, and the ship can roll at angles of 45 degrees in high seas”.

Her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday will be celebrated on Thursday, when Tasmanian Polar Network members, government officials and expeditioners past and present will celebrate her service. Among the visitors tomorrow will be expeditioners who sailed on the first voyage south.

This year the ship will operate to all four Australian stations delivering a resupply of food, fuel and cargo along with a changeover of personnel. The ship will also carry out a marine science project in the Totten and Mertz glacier areas.

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