

Transcript:

AusSMC ONLINE BRIEFING: Ice ain't ice - Antarctic ice in climate change

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Well thanks Lyndal and good morning everybody.

I'm just focussing on some of the policy issues that arise out of the science that's been so well described by my colleagues. And this slide that you can see really just comes up with the summary of the work that we've put into the documents that have been released to date.

An important point upfront is that Australians and Australian science plays a key role in filling the gaps and uncertainties that are identified in the work on ice sheets in the IPCC's Fourth Assessment. And this, as Ian has indicated, is particularly important in relating to sea level rise projections.

Now Australian's work is undertaken in collaborative manner with a number of other countries but it is important to note that we are important participants in the international climate change research centering on the work on ice sheets and on sea ice as well.

We lead research programs, we have important field work in the Australian Antarctic territory, we also provide logistic support for both our own Australian Antarctic program and the collaborative programs that we participate in, and this an important contribution to the science effort and it shouldn't be neglected.

In relation to sea ice, Australia too takes a lead role in research in the Antarctic sea ice zone and the material and research that Tony has reflected upon has had significant contributions made by Australians over the last decades and that work will continue on.

Now it is important that we understand the changes in sea ice extent and thickness and the impact that it has on both climate change and potential changes eco systems. And this in a way comes to the third dot point on the slide: that changes in sea ice will have an impact on resource management. As Tony has indicated the sea ice provides both a habitat and a refuge for a range of species, but also changes will have impact in patterns of exploitation of these resources, particularly fisheries resources, but also impacting on shipping related to around the Antarctic and sub Antarctic areas including tourism and the petition analysis reports on some of the potential consequences of changes in sea ice for Antarctic tourism operations, mostly obviously located around the Antarctic Peninsula. But clearly some of the potential there for increased access to areas that have not been fully chartered raise some potential problems in managing that activity.

So we not only have some uncertainties relating to the science that we're addressing but we're also having to address some of the potential consequences of changes particularly in the sea ice area for management of resources and activities in Antarctica and it's surrounding waters.

The final point I want to make that links back to both the position of papers is that Australian scientists will be making important and significant contribution to the work that will feed into the next Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment Report, the fifth assessment which is at the moment in planning stages. Australian science will fill an important gap in uncertainties that were identified in the fourth assessment report and will continue to address these issues into the future.

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