AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC MEDAL (AAM)

Mr Robert Anders KING, TAS
For his outstanding contribution to the Australian Antarctic Program, particularly through innovative research in marine biology.

Mr Robert King's innovative work includes designing the state of the art krill aquarium at the Australian Antarctic Division, which is the only facility of its kind in the world. This facility has attracted researchers from across the globe to conduct experiments on live krill, the results of which have been published in the highest ranking scientific journals and substantially improved the understanding of this keystone Antarctic species.

Mr King developed a sophisticated multi-chamber experimental system that enabled the assessment of the vulnerability of different life stages of krill (eggs, larvae and adults) to ocean acidification and climate change. He also developed a portable aquarium system to allow the transportation of krill by air from the Antarctic using RAAF C-17. More recently, he developed a mooring system to monitor krill behaviour in the wild throughout a full 12-month cycle, including when the ocean's surface is frozen.

His most recent innovation, 'the wet-well system on RSV Nuyina', represents a major paradigm shift for experimental marine biology. The system successfully and effectively collects live organisms (even the most fragile animals) in perfect condition, by allowing marine organisms to directly flow in by gravity through inlets in the ship's hull as the ship sails along, rather than the conventional way of using dedicated ship time and towing nets which damages the organisms. This is a significant change in experimental marine biology for the marine science community internationally, allowing experiments on key marine species such as salps and jellyfish, which could develop a more prominent role in the ecosystem if krill are negatively affected by climate change in the future.

AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC MEDAL (AAM)

Mr Aaron Charles READ, QLD

For his outstanding contribution to the Australian Antarctic Program, particularly through the establishment and leadership of the Wilkins Ice Runway Aerodrome in East Antarctica.

Mr Aaron Read has made an exceptional contribution to the Australian Antarctic Program (AAP) over 19 seasons. He is individually responsible for surveying, designing, building and certifying the Wilkins Ice Runway Aerodrome (Wilkins) in East Antarctica located 70km from Casey Station. The runway was first opened in 2010 and has changed the way the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) move personnel and cargo in and out of East Antarctica.

From 2016 Mr Read established a system of remote opening of Wilkins during the winter months, including training of winter staff in basic survey capture. He tirelessly mentored junior aviation ground support officers and Wilkins staff in one of the harshest and most isolated operating environments in the world, ensuring complete confidence was built with the Regulator.

He has delivered an outstanding safety record for the AAP and its staff. Without Mr Read's complete dedication and focus, Australia would not be able to conduct up to 25 regular RAAF C-17 and Airbus A319 movements to East Antarctica every summer. The AAP would still be moving personnel and cargo solely by ship. This dedication continues today as enthusiastically as his first deployment to Antarctica in 2001.

For the 2022/23 season, Mr Read volunteered and was deployed at short notice to Wilkins to lead the wintering crew to open the runway after an unprecedented level of snow during the winter. He mobilised the team on site to transform a situation where the runway may not have opened at all, to instead delivering a reduced length 1850m runway. This was possible due to his hard work, leadership and strong relationship with CASA, Defence and Sky Traders. Mr Read has transformed the way the AAD operate in East Antarctica and his contribution to the AAP is immense.

AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC MEDAL (AAM)

Ms Lisa Anne WILKINSON, Kaoota TAS 7150
For her outstanding contribution to the Australian Antarctic Program, particularly through advocacy for diversity and inclusion.

Ms Lisa Wilkinson's experience as an electrician in Antarctica has her in a unique position to relate closely to the experiences of other trades people on station. She establishes a rapport, putting fellow trades people at ease and provides a safe space for them to engage in. This helps tie the technical groups together and forms strong working relationships that may not otherwise develop. This is critical at times when there may be an incident to investigate or a problem to solve.

Ms Wilkinson is an exceptional technical writer and voluntarily developed the electrical safety policy for her branch. This has been accepted more broadly through the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). She also delivers related training to all AAD expeditioners.

She regularly extends beyond her duties for the benefit of others, including joining the diversity and inclusion working group. She has been a staunch advocate for women's participation in the Australian Antarctic Program and participates in the Department of Education's STEM Professional in Schools program, inspiring the next generation.

During her seasons south, she initiated and encouraged community spirit through a range of social activities. She was always willing to lend a hand and help out when someone needed support. Ms Wilkinson assisted delegations in discussions with the station leader and articulated their concerns without prejudice or malice. She is a strong supporter and advocate for current expeditioners and their mental health and wellbeing. It is her unique personality and approach to life and work that defines her as an exceptional expeditioner and employee.