

## THE AUSTRALIAN

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# Icebreaker a 'clear signal' for all of Australia's ambition

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A new \$530m icebreaker, arriving in Hobart on Saturday, has more gadgets than a Bond film, promises to revolutionise Antarctic operations and sends a “clear signal” about Australia’s ambitions.

Environment Minister Sussan Ley said the RSV Nuyina – with an internal “moon pool” to deploy robot subs, stealth mode and drop keels to snoop on whales – significantly bolstered Australia’s status as an Antarctic leader.

“It’s not just a very impressive piece of kit ... it is sending a clear signal about our Antarctic commitment and our ongoing ambition and our determination to preserve those values that are in the Antarctic Treaty,” she said.

“The leadership we want to preserve comes from the environmental integrity and from the investment in science, and there’s nothing that demonstrates that more than investing in the most advanced ship in the world.”

Antarctic scientists are keen to see the “floating research platform” that promises to help unlock mysteries of climate, ice and ecosystems.

“Nuyina’s arrival represents a starting point for the future of Antarctic science in the Australian program because it is so well equipped with all of the science capability we need to answer the big challenges in Antarctic science,” said Nicole Webster, chief scientist with the

Australian Antarctic Division. “It provides us with capability that we’ve never had before and that spans marine science, atmospheric science and icesheet science.”

The “moon pool” – a 13m vertical shaft running from a deck at the centre of the ship to the ocean surface below – will allow in situ deployment of equipment, such as robotic subs. A wet well – a watertight space below the water line – will process up to 5000 litres of seawater per minute, allowing collection of undisturbed creatures such as krill and jellyfish.

“It enables us to capture in pristine condition the really fragile sea creatures that we haven’t been able to capture in that condition before,” Professor Webster said.

Helicopters based on the ship will allow access further into the Antarctic interior. And silent operation mode would allow researchers to creep up on sea creatures and use acoustic instruments in the ship’s hull and extendible drop keels to map the sea floor, detect fish and krill, and listen in to whale calls.

Ms Ley said the Romanian-built ship, named for an Aboriginal word for the southern lights, would support Australia’s development of an inland traverse capability and its search for a million-year-old ice core. “It allows us to become the best possible stewards of the part of Antarctica we’re in.”

The 160.3m-long Nuyina, capable of carrying 117 passengers and 32 crew, replaces the [Aurora Australis, retired from service in March 2020 after 30 years.](#)

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