



25 May 2009

MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

A FRAME HUT FIRE IN ANTARCTICA

The iconic A Frame Hut near Scott Base, Antarctica burnt down on Saturday evening. A routine inspection and change over of diesel fuel tanks, which supplied the heating to the hut, was being completed by Scott Base Staff. Upon re-ignition of the heater the priming fuel flashed over and set fire to the hut. Attempts to fight the fire proved futile as the timber and bitumen hut burnt quickly while outside air temperatures were as low as -35 degrees Celsius.

Chief Executive of Antarctica New Zealand, Lou Sanson said, “We are extremely thankful that no one was seriously injured in the fire. It is a testimony to the skill of our staff that they were able to think quickly and remove themselves from harm.”

The A Frame Hut had become an icon of the modern Antarctic era. It was moved out onto the Ross Ice Shelf in 1971 from the McMurdo Station ice wharf. Discarded by the United States Antarctic Program, the Kiwis of Scott Base quickly made it their own. It was primarily used as a base for field training of Scott Base Staff and occasionally as a retreat. The A Frame Hut has housed many notable New Zealand scientists, artists and politicians including Prime Minister John Key. In May 2004 the hut famously survived 12 hours of over 160km per hour winds with two Scott Base staff inside and was also the favourite haunt of Sir Edmund Hillary who spent his last night in Antarctica there in 2007.

Lou Sanson said, “The A Frame represented something uniquely Kiwi in Antarctica. It was the concept of a mountain hut mixed with a bach and it said something about who we are. The A Frame Hut will be sadly missed by all those who have been part of the New Zealand Programme in Antarctica over the last 38 Years”.

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