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PRESS STATEMENT

***palawa kani* names the new Icebreaker - *nuyina*: Southern Lights**

Tasmanian Aborigines are delighted that the name chosen for the Antarctic Division's newest icebreaker is from *palawa kani*, the language of Tasmanian Aborigines. The word **nuyina** means the southern lights, the Aurora Australis.

We congratulate the students of both St. Virgils College, Hobart and Secret Harbour Primary School in Western Australia for their winning choice of this word.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre was very happy to approve the word's use. Firstly, it honours Tasmanian Aboriginal language and its continuing adaptations over hundreds of years to new circumstances and uses. Secondly, this choice rewards the admirable attitudes expressed by all the young people across Australia who nominated any Aboriginal name for the vessel. We commend the Australian Antarctic Division for devising a competition for schools as the way to select the name, and the opportunity that gave so many young people to give serious thought to articulating statements about history, the environment, science, scholarship and – in our view, most importantly - their responsibility to Aboriginal people. We were very impressed with the statements we received from students who asked to submit *palawa kani* names.

It's been a long time since the word **nuyina** was shared by Aborigines with government agent George Augustus Robinson, as they watched the lights together in 1831 from near Ansons Bay and again in 1837 from Flinders Island. Since that time our original six to twelve languages were decimated to the point where not enough of any one of them remains today to form a whole language. But strong Aboriginal community efforts led to the revival in the 1990s of one statewide language, *palawa kani*, which combines authentic words and usages from those languages spoken before invasion.

By now, three generations of Aboriginal children have grown up learning to speak *palawa kani*. It also is becoming increasingly valued and sought after in Tasmanian public life – from MONA's dark MOFO festival and TMAG installations, to a children's TV animated show and now a period thriller film under production; in 14 original place names slowly beginning to appear on official signs and maps, and the Australian Maritime College's newest underwater AUV.

Such acknowledgment of authentic Aboriginal language in Tasmania has been long overdue, and much welcomed by the Aboriginal community. We look forward to further opportunities for appropriate collaborations; today's great news about this naming is a perfect example of one.

Daisy Allan
palawa kani Language Worker

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