

Australia plans drill of ancient Antarctic ice core

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This file illustration photo, released on November 1, 2011 by the Antarctic Ocean Alliance, shows Antarctic icebergs. Australia announced plans to drill a 2,000 year-old ice core in the heart of Antarctica in a bid to retrieve a frozen record of how the planet has evolved and what might be in store.

Australia announced plans to drill a 2,000 year-old ice core in the heart of Antarctica in a bid to retrieve a frozen record of how the planet has evolved and what might be in store.

The Aurora Basin North project involves scientists from Australia, France, [Denmark](#) and the United States who hope it will also advance the search for the scientific "holy grail" of the million-year-old ice core.

The project, in a area that harbours some of the deepest ice in the frozen continent, over three kilometres (1.9-miles) thick, will give experts access to some of the most detailed records yet of past climate in the vast region.

Australian Environment Minister Tony Burke on Saturday said such drills were critically important to understanding how the climate has naturally varied to help predict future responses to [global climate change](#).

"Ice cores provide the written history of our [atmosphere](#) and our water," he said in announcing the project which will start with a French team traversing the site in December next year.

The eight-week drill through 400 metres (1,312 feet) of ice, 600 kilometres inland from Australia's Casey Station in the continent's east, will follow soon after.

"Seeking ice cores from this new area where there is much higher snow fall than other inland sites provides a massive increase in the level of detail which lives within the ice," Burke added.

"We have had information that is 2,000 years old before, but we have never had access to this sort of detail which we believe lies deep within this part of the ice."

He said it was an [international effort](#) in the quest for even older [ice](#).

"It is expected that this will lead to actual drilling for a one million-year-

old core by various international consortia in the coming years," he said.

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