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‘Oceans governance’ describes the array of norms, principles, institutions and processes through which the international community is seeking to manage ocean spaces in the twenty-first century as they come under increasing pressure from human activities. The oceans governance narrative dominates research and commentary on ocean affairs, and is widely reflected in the practice of states as they deploy new approaches and tools for cooperative marine management. Governments have recognized the limitations of a zonal paradigm for oceans management, and the necessity for an integrated, coordinated and systemic approach to address contemporary oceans challenges across jurisdictional boundaries. It is an approach compelled by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which acknowledges in its Preamble that ‘the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole’.

This book assesses how an oceans governance agenda is being advanced in the dynamic ocean regions at the highest latitudes. Both the Arctic and Southern Oceans are marine bioregions experiencing the rapid and early effects of climate change and ocean acidification, are areas of vital strategic interest, present significant potential for mineral resource and fisheries exploitation, face increasing pressures from human visitation, and have inestimable environmental, cultural and scientific value. The polar oceans are therefore crucibles for testing how integrated, eco-systemic governance frameworks can be developed to meet and address volatile environmental, political and economic conditions in the current geological era, the Anthropocene, in which human activities have touched all landscapes and seascapes on Earth.

This book takes a ‘bipolar’ approach, comparing how oceans governance questions are being addressed in the polar regions. In doing so the book focuses on Australian and Canadian experiences in polar oceans management as these governments seek to advance their objectives through global and regional institutions operating in their respective polar domains. The experiences of these similar middle powers provide a valuable lens through which to view polar oceans governance questions more broadly. In engaging with Arctic affairs, Canada faces significant
challenges as a coastal state concerned not only to assert its sovereign rights under the law of the sea, but also to ensure that this does not undermine effective cooperation among Arctic and global stakeholders. In the Southern Ocean the dilemma for Australia is similar, as Australia is a prominent and active claimant to Antarctic territory and offshore areas but must pursue its Southern Ocean objectives within a highly developed and sometimes unresponsive cooperation regime: the Antarctic Treaty System.

The book is the latest product of a long-standing research network of active Australian and Canadian scholars on issues of oceans policy. Since 1993, the Australia Canada Oceans Research Network (ACORN) has brought together Australian and Canadian researchers to collaborate on research on issues of marine policy and law common to these large coastal and federal states. Previous ACORN research initiatives have involved the comparative examination of oceans policies and laws, theoretical approaches to oceans governance, and specific contemporary challenges including sovereignty and security, jurisdiction, shipping, biodiversity and marine environmental protection. The outcome of this research has been three monographs: Kriwoken, Haward, VanderZwaag and Davis (eds), *Oceans Law and Policy in the Post-UNCED Era: Australian and Canadian Perspectives* (1996), Rothwell and Vander-Zwaag (eds), *Towards Principled Oceans Governance: Australian and Canadian Approaches and Challenges* (2006), and now this volume.

This project commenced with a workshop in December 2011, hosted by the Sydney Centre for International Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Sydney, Australia, with very capable administrative assistance provided by Amber Colhoun, Centre Administrator. At the workshop, attended by the bulk of the contributors to this volume and several additional invitees, including Ben Boer, Michael Byers and Gillian Triggs, the core elements of the project were developed and mapped. The workshop received financial support from the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney, made possible by the then Dean of Law, Gillian Triggs. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Canadian High Commission, facilitated by Mary Lou Hayman and Carlton Hughes at the Commission in Canberra. The High Commission also arranged for images from the Arctic region, collected by *Canadian Geographic* over eighty years, to be presented at a public exhibition alongside the workshop. These provided stunning illustrations of the beauty and fragility of the Arctic Ocean environment.

We extend thanks to our colleagues who participated in the workshop and who contributed their insights in their chapters in this volume. Many other colleagues also encouraged and contributed in various ways to the
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project more generally, including Ben Boer, Ben Saul and Fleur Johns at the University of Sydney. We are particularly grateful to our colleague and founding ACORN member, Don Rothwell, who provided much of the intellectual impetus in the initial formulation of this, the latest ACORN project.

As the book neared completion we were very fortunate to have the editorial assistance of Susan Rolston at Seawinds Consulting Services, with financial support from the Schulich Academic Excellence Fund, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University. Susan’s efforts were indispensable in the final stages in editing and compiling the manuscript. The research support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is also acknowledged through a grant to David VanderZwaag for a project titled ‘Tracking and Envisioning the Future of Artic Ocean Governance’. We also thank Ben Booth at Edward Elgar for guiding the book from its very earliest stages as a mere concept through to its production and publication. The text is current as at the end of August 2013, although in some instances it was possible to discuss more recent developments.

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Sydney, Australia and Halifax, Canada
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Map Two  Antarctica and the Southern Ocean