Group links Antarctic resources meeting to Paris climate talks

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IN less than five weeks the United Nations will hold a crucial climate change conference in France.

And, conservation groups yesterday warned — through the creation of a beautiful but doomed work of art — that any progress made in Paris to combat climate change would in part be dependant on the conduct of international delegates in Hobart for the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) meeting, which ends on Friday.

Since 2012 the delegates from 25 countries and the European Union have been trying, at CCAMLR meetings, to reach consensus on two proposed Southern Ocean marine protected areas.

Yesterday the Antarctic Ocean Alliance provided them with a graphic reminder of what they were fighting for — an ice sculpture, with penguins on top, carved outside CCAMLR’s Macquarie St headquarters by Tasmanian artist Peter Bignell.

Mark Epstein, executive director of the Washington based Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, part of the Alliance said, to keep tabs on climate change’s progress scientists would rely on marine protected areas — large enough areas left undisturbed by other forms of human activity — as reference points.

“Antarctica will be the ground zero of Climate Change,” he said.