

■ EXPEDITION

SA Agulhas II cruises in late

ODWA MKENTANE

odwa.mkentane@inl.co.za

FAMILY, friends and media waited for more than eight hours at the East Pier Quay at the V&A Waterfront on Monday to welcome the late arrival of those aboard the SA Agulhas II ship which returned from Gough Island.

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) said the ship arrived after 6pm on Monday, when no family, friends or media were there to welcome them.

DEFF spokesperson Zolile Nqayi said: "The vessel only arrived after 6pm on Monday. Most of the scientists on board have returned home."

The SA Agulhas II and the Gough 65 Expedition team, consisting of researchers and scientists, were deployed to the island to test building

materials made from alien invasive plants for future island infrastructure, and their capacity to withstand the harsh weather conditions.

"The scientific contribution included seal research on Tristan da Cunha and water sampling by Walter Sisulu University on Gough Island. There was also a team working on the eradication of mice on the island. The preparations have progressed well for this project, which is expected to start in 2020," Nqayi said.

"Apart from routine maintenance, personnel of the National Department of Public Works (DPW) installed a new standby generator. The base now has three generators to provide a reliable power supply.

"DPW also assisted with extensive ground preparations and the erection of infrastructure for the



THE team aboard the SA Agulhas II research vessel returns from a voyage to Gough Island. | **ARMAND HOUGH** African News Agency (ANA)

mice-eradication project planned for next year," he added.

"This Gough voyage had large volumes of cargo due to the mice-eradication equipment, and also the extra load of the 'field hut pilot pro-

ject'. The aim of this hut is twofold: to have an emergency station on the island and to test the efficacy of the material in withstanding the harsh conditions at Gough Island." Nqayi said.