

An Antipodean Perspective

New Zealand is an island nation isolated in a huge ocean. To place it in context, we have a land mass roughly the size of Italy, a population of four million and the distance from Auckland to Sydney approximates that of London/Moscow. One should not be surprised, therefore, either at the breadth of hydrographic activity taking place in this small nation or the number of changes we see in the profession.

At the end of last year we enjoyed an excellent symposium, HYDRO 2003, with a number of excellent papers. Cor Don commented on this conference in an earlier issue of this journal, including in his remarks the wide range of topics discussed. One of the papers was a report on the NZ Continental Shelf project, one of immense importance to NZ, which has the fifth largest EEZ in the world. The project is being hailed as a sterling example of co-operation (between various government departments and agencies, as well as with our large neighbour, Australia), planning and organisation. New Zealand is spending some \$NZ44 million on the project to delineate the continental shelf in support of a claim to the UN. Originally planned for submission in 2006, the timeline has been extended to 2009, accepted by NZ in order to allow some extra time to regional governments.

The desk study was a model example of the process and it is being praised as an example for other nations preparing submissions to follow. The surveys were completed almost two years ago, the data is being analysed and the voluminous reports are being prepared both in the traditional way and in computer-based presentation formats.

I was recently a guest at the change of command ceremony for HMNZS RESOLUTION, the Royal NZ Navy's research/survey vessel. She has just completed a refit and has undergone a number of changes, the most immediately obvious of these being that she has been painted from her traditional survey-ship colours of white with a buff funnel to warship grey. I have to admit that she looks well, and certainly business-like in her new colour. She is now back at sea undertaking both contracted surveys for the national topographic and hydrographic authority and military tasks.

Changes in NZ hydrography over the past ten years mirror many of those taking place elsewhere but also reflect changes in which this small country has been the leader. Many of us were concerned that the naval Hydrographic Service could atrophy in the world of contest. However, the changes which have seen RESOLUTION turn grey and which lead to the removal of her large towed array winch aft have also seen the Service become more involved in the work of the NZ Defence Force and, I believe, more readily accepted as a vital part of it. To a large measure the principal purpose for the organisation has been rediscovered and the Service - civilian and military personnel, ashore and afloat - has been invigorated as the leader of the NZ Defence Joint Geospatial Defence Support Facility.

As this issue and HYDRO 2003 have showed, hydrographic surveyors throughout the world undertake their calling in some extreme conditions. I understand that some of our naval survey ratings are currently engaged in geospatial programme support in Afghanistan. That seems pretty extreme to me!