



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Waikato Professor Scoops the (Coastal) Research Pool

Terry Healy, Research Professor at the University of Waikato has won a coveted "Preisträger" award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation of Germany. The award recognises Prof. Healy's outstanding research in coastal marine science.

Professor Healy is the first New Zealand scientist to achieve senior "Preisträger status".

The award is reserved for the most highly acclaimed and innovative international leaders in their field. The \$150,000 award will support on-going collaboration with coastal marine scientists in Germany.

"Obviously I am delighted—it's a major pinnacle of my career" said Professor Healy, who leads the Coastal Marine Group at University of Waikato. "At Waikato we have a very active group working on coastal sedimentation processes, oceanography and modelling, with emphasis on application to port and harbour studies and the extreme phenomena such as tsunamis".

"I am surprised at gaining this prestigious award, because my strength is in 'applied' rather than pure science". He recalls that in the 1970s "applied science" was not well viewed by his colleagues. "Even today, some sectors of academia view money from industry as slightly tainted, but much high-quality research is being undertaken with committed industry funding".

Although his PhD was on atmospheric jet streams, upon being appointed to Waikato University Earth Sciences department in the 1970s, Terry commenced research into sediment studies of Tauranga Harbour. "I visited the (then) Bay of Plenty Harbour Board and cheekily told them they had a problem, and we could help them—but it would cost some dollars!" he reminisces.

Since then, the Port of Tauranga, as it now is, has supported 20 of his masters and doctoral thesis projects. In addition the Port sponsors his professorial chair—the first chair in science sponsored by industry in New Zealand. Likewise many students have been helped in funded projects from the Ports of Gisborne, Taranaki, Onehunga, and Northland. In all he has supervised some 70 graduate students, most of whom have been on externally funded research contracts.

Presently he is working on a variety of projects from "Redesign of Port Gisborne for the 21st century", to research the impact of extracting deep sand from the Hauraki Gulf, to finding innovative ways to get mud deposits out of marinas. At the same time, he is editing a book on "muddy coasts" of the world.

Terry's initial contact with Germany was as a Humboldt Research Fellow in the 1970s. "I got that by a great coinci-



dence. While in Antarctica at a party in McMurdo I met a student of Prof. Eugen Seibold, the leading marine geologist in Germany. I was very impressed by the work Seibold was doing and so decided to apply". Prof. Seibold became his mentor, and went on to become the President of both the DFG (German and Research Foundation) as well as the European Science Foundation, and was awarded the Blue Planet Prize in 1996. They still keep in close contact.

Professor Healy has also been the recipient of other prestigious international awards including a Japan Society for Promotion of Science Fellowship (1989), a Fullbright Research Fellowship (1995)—"all prestige and little money" he muses—and a Monbusho (Japan) Senior Fellowship (1996). He was also vice-president for several years of the international SCOR (Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research) of UNESCO, and recently completed his term as Chairperson of the Bay of Plenty Conservation Board.

And other highlights of his career? The establishment in 1996 of the Centre of Excellence in Coastal Oceanography and Marine Geology at University of Waikato, through the

initiative of NIWA, and the appointment of Prof. Kerry Black—"my brightest and most dynamic student" to the joint NIWA—Waikato University chair in hydrodynamic numerical modelling. "The Centre has really linked us closely with our colleagues in NIWA. This gives our graduate students great advantage in their projects and the quality of the science remains very high. Professor Kerry Black is an international leading light for that centre". "New Zealand is a very coastal country, and it is fitting that that the leading national centre of coastal research is here inland at Waikato University!" he notes bemused.

Professor Healy, accompanied by his wife Judy-Ann, departs for Bremen in Germany on September 19th. Under the award, he will spend 9 months in visits over the next 5 years.

While the Preistrager award has never been previously won by a New Zealand scientist, about 100 New Zealand scientists have been granted Humboldt research fellowships over the past decades. The past president of the Royal Society

of New Zealand, Professor Phillippa Black is one outstanding recipient for her work.

The Humboldt Foundation also supports several hundred young scientists annually from all parts of the globe over a variety of scientific disciplines. These scientists visit Germany as Humboldt Research Fellows to work with German mentors and colleagues. As part of the experience, research fellows are given opportunity to learn German language and culture, and undertake a 2 week study tour through the cultural heritage heartland of Germany. But it is access to the very modern high technology laboratories that most visiting scientists find awesome.

"We really get a scientific adrenalin rush from working alongside colleagues with some of the best analytical equipment available in the world" claims Professor Nigel Sammes, a Waikato University Humboldt Fellow who has recently returned from a year researching fuel cells at University of Stuttgart.