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National Plan 2002-2003 Financial Position

Financial statements reporting the cost of National Plan administration and operations have been reviewed by PricewaterhouseCoopers and are included in the Financial Statements on page 20 of this report.

The operating deficit of \$316,373 for the 2002/2003 financial year was in line with the 'break even over time' policy set by government. Revenue from the Protection of the Sea Levy provided the main source of funding for National Plan operations. The Protection of the Sea Levy remained at 3.3 cents per net registered tonne.

Total income received during the 2002/2003 financial year increased by \$125,474 compared with the previous financial year. Incidents during the year consisted of a number of minor spills committed by unidentified parties.

National Plan expenditure decreased by 11% from 2002-2003, with total expenses of \$4,529,144. This is largely the result of decreased depreciation charges.

As at 30 June 2003 the National Plan's total assets were \$8,601,091 compared with total liabilities of \$798,129. This places the National Plan in a sound financial position, with equity totalling \$7,802,962.

Meetings during 2002-2003

The National Plan Management Committee (NPMC) met in Sydney on 16 September 2002 and in Canberra on 4 February 2003, with the main agenda items being funding, implementing the potential polluter pays principle and the Committee's future work program and key performance indicators.

National Plan Operations Group

The National Plan Operations Group (NPOG) met in Melbourne on 21 November 2002 and 15 May 2003 to consider issues such as the distribution and transfer of National Plan first strike capability assets to the States/NT, standard proforma for incident reporting, National Plan training,

attendance at overseas incidents, deployment of staff between agencies, chemical spill risk assessment and the review of National Plan Guidelines which support the Intergovernmental Agreement.

Implementation of OPRC-HNS Protocol

In March 2000, an IMO Diplomatic Conference adopted the Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Co-operation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances, 2000 (OPRC-HNS Protocol). The OPRC-HNS Protocol provides a global framework for international co-operation in combating major incidents or threats of marine pollution by substances other than oil. Parties to the OPRC-HNS Protocol will be required to establish measures for dealing with chemical pollution incidents, either nationally or in cooperation with other countries. The Protocol will enter into force twelve months after the date on which not less than fifteen States accept it.

The major revision of Australia's chemical spill contingency plan (Chemplan) completed in early 2002 provides the basis for Australia's implementation of this Protocol. A detailed proposal for implementation of the Protocol was considered and endorsed by the National Plan Management Committee in March 2002 and Australian adoption of the Protocol was endorsed by the Australian Transport Council in November 2002. No legislation will be required to give effect to this Protocol. A National Interest Analysis has been finalised and Australian ratification of the Protocol is expected in the first half of 2004.

Spillcon 2002 - Sydney

More than 250 oil spill response specialists attended Spillcon 2002 at Manly in Sydney. The theme of the conference was 'Keeping the Waters Clean'.

The conference brought together the leading figures in marine pollution from the Asia-Pacific region to examine past incidents and the future of oil and chemical spill response. Spillcon conferences, which are held every two years, have

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become the region's premier environmental pollution prevention and response event.

The conference featured an on-water display of pollution response equipment provided by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), the Sydney Ports Corporation and the oil industry.

The display included a low level pass by a fixed-wing dispersant spraying aircraft and a helicopter slung-loaded with a spray bucket. Boom was set up around the Gore Bay oil terminal on Sydney Harbour where the 1999 *Laura d'Amato* spill occurred and oil recovery vessels such as Marco skimmers were deployed. Support provided by the Sydney Ports Corporation contributed to the success of Spillcon 2002.

Audits and Reviews

An internal audit of the Oil Spill Response Atlas (OSRA) project was completed in December 2002. The focus of the audit was on the management of the data and security aspects. OSRA is a major decision support system for the National Plan and was last audited in 1999.

The audit report concluded that *"The results of our review of OSRA were pleasing and found the overall data management, data maintenance, and internal controls to be effective. The internal controls surrounding OSRA are adequate to ensure security and material accuracy over data input, processing and output."* The auditors expressed particular appreciation for the comprehensive information provided and co-operation from the AMSA officers involved.

The only finding was that the OSRA Policy Management Guidelines, originally adopted in 1999, required updating. A revision of the National Plan Oil Spill Response Atlas Policy has been completed by AMSA including updates on the OSRA Technical Specification and Management Guidelines.

Vancouver Conference

The International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC) was held in April 2003 in Vancouver Canada and two AMSA staff attended the conference, trade exhibits and on-water display of spill response equipment.

The Manager, Environment Protection Response, Emergency Response, co-chaired the conference segment that dealt with marine pollution incident case studies and the Principal Adviser Scientific and Environment, Maritime Safety and Environmental Strategy, delivered a paper on the Australian Oil Spill Response Atlas.

A significant number of papers were presented on a range of marine pollution response management and technology and other issues during the conference with up to seven concurrent sessions. A CD-ROM of all the past papers of the IOSC is available from the organisers and summary papers of major outcomes of the conference have been provided by AMSA to NPOG.

The response to the *Erika*, *Jacob Luckenbach* and *Prestige* incidents were addressed during the conference and a number of papers on oil removal technology from sunken shipwrecks were presented. This area of oil removal technology appears to be of increasing interest with recent incidents highlighting the limited availability of skills and resources for deep-sea oil removal. New developments such as Remote Off-Loading System (ROLS) and other hot-tap techniques using Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) are generating heightened interest.

The *Prestige* incident reinforced the importance of timely and effective salvage support as well as "Places of Refuge" considerations. The incident has also generated interest in the behaviour of heavy oils in deep-sea environments, for example leakage from sunken tankers and other shipwrecks containing residual or bunker oils.

On Scene

The fifth edition of On Scene was printed and distributed to all National Plan stakeholders in August 2003. Of note were articles on the Phillip Island oil spill, the outcome of the IMO Diplomatic Conference on the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund, AMOSC attending the *Prestige* oil spill and the new Fixed Wing Aerial Dispersant Capability contract.

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CHEMPLAN

The National Marine Chemical Spill Contingency Plan (CHEMPLAN) defines the response arrangements to chemical spills in the marine environment that have the potential to impact on any of Australia's interests, which include those of an environmental, health, resource or economic nature. The Plan outlines combined government and industry arrangements designed to allow a rapid and cooperative response to a maritime chemical spill occurring within the area defined by this Plan. It is complemented by other Government and industry contingency plans prepared at Commonwealth, State/NT, regional, port and facility levels. Matters of detail are contained in local, site specific, contingency plans.

The specialised Fire Services Hazardous Chemical (HazChem) response units and Chemical Spill Response units of State/NT Environmental Agencies are the designated combat agencies under direction of the Combat or Statutory Agency. This structure maximises the utilisation of existing local resources and expertise in fire and toxic emission control, chemical spill containment, clean up and decontamination operations.

Due to the wide range of chemicals and their diverse hazards and properties, specialist expertise from the fire brigades, HazMat units, chemical industry, AMSA's advisers and environmental agencies is sought to ensure that safe and practical response systems are employed.

The Plan relates primarily to incidents involving spills from ships of bulk chemical cargoes, container chemical tanks and packaged chemicals, and other dangerous goods lost overboard at sea. The Plan sets out response options for releases of gases and vapours and chemicals that dissolve, evaporate, float and sink. Responsibility for packaged substances washed ashore generally resides with the State/NT authority.

During the year a major revision of CHEMPLAN was completed and the revised plan placed on the

National Plan internet site at the link:

www.amsa.gov.au/me/natplan/ContplanChem/Chem.htm

A National Plan Maritime Chemical Spill Response training course was held from 6 to 8 May 2003 in Melbourne in conjunction with Marine Safety Victoria. AMSA took a leading role in developing material and providing presentations at the course. The Level 2 Course is designed for middle management chemical spill response personnel (including Fire Services and HazMat Units), who could be designated as part of the National Response Team (NRT) as potential Incident Controllers, Deputies or Environment and Scientific Coordinators.

The Victorian Fire Authorities demonstrated a range of fire and chemical spill response equipment, systems and vehicles to participants. This was followed by a visit to the Coode Island tank farm/chemical storage facility, observing a bulk chemical tanker being off-loaded and then a tour of the Melbourne port on board a tug.

An exercise conducted during the course involved a hypothetical scenario of a chemical tanker grounding on Port Phillip Heads and a leak of bulk styrene and subsequent ship fire and pollution. A computer model that predicts the fate and movement of chemical spills in the marine environment was demonstrated to participants by Asia-Pacific ASA.



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National Place of Refuge Guidelines

The NPMC agreed at its 4th meeting on 26 March 2002 to form a Working Group to prepare draft National Place of Refuge Guidelines. The Guidelines were finalised, with input from Working Group members, in November 2002. The Australian Maritime Group (AMG) considered the draft Guidelines at a meeting in February 2003, as a result of which the Guidelines were submitted to the Standing Committee on Transport (SCOT) for its April 2003 meeting. Following SCOT endorsement, the Guidelines were endorsed by the Australian Transport Council (ATC) at its 23 May 2003 meeting.

Prestige

On 13 November 2002 the oil tanker *Prestige*, laden with 77,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil and having been damaged in a storm, began to leak oil off the coast of Spain. The vessel was towed off shore, and on 19 November 2002, the tanker broke in two off

the coast of Galicia, Spain, spilling an unknown but substantial quantity of its cargo. The oil from the *Prestige* affected over 240 kilometres of the Atlantic coast from Vigo in Spain to La Rochelle in France, with the major impact of the spill in Galicia where fishing exclusion zones were put in place along 90% of the coastline and extending 14 kilometres offshore.

In response to the *Prestige* accident, measures were proposed to IMO by the European Union to revise the MARPOL Convention with respect to bringing forward the phasing-out of single hull tankers and to prohibit the carriage of dirty oils by single hull tankers.

The Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre in Geelong financed a senior staff member to work alongside personnel from the UK based Oil Spill Response Limited during the clean up following the *Prestige* incident. This experience will benefit our spill response capabilities.