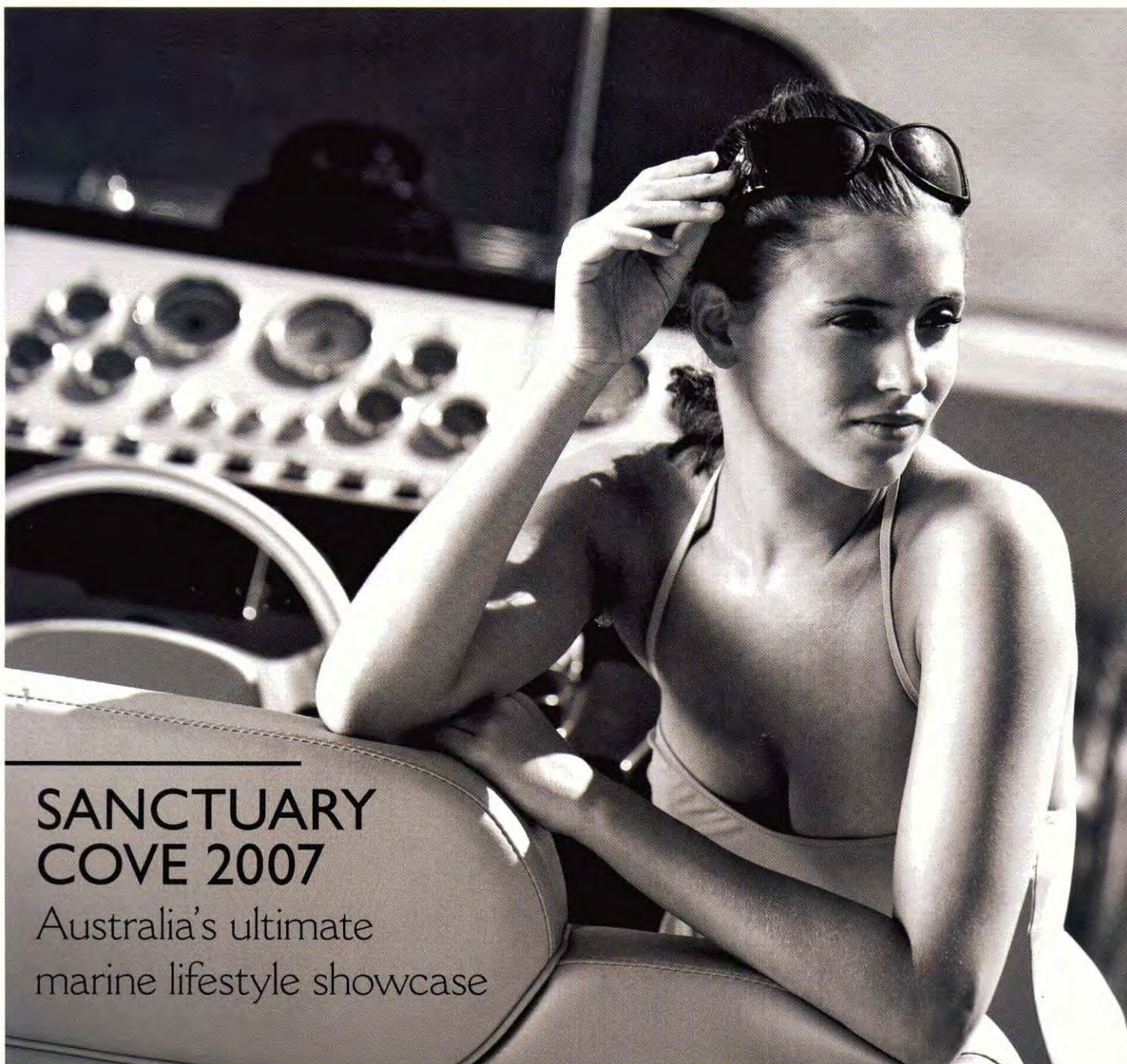




CLUB MARINE

Vol. 22 No. 3



SANCTUARY COVE 2007

Australia's ultimate
marine lifestyle showcase

| SPEED THRILLS Sea-Doo Launch | FOLLOW THE SUN Jeanneau Odyssey |
| MORE IS BETTER Haines Signature | OVER THE MOON Cape York Fishing |



From the Helm



So much to say, so little space to say it in... The last couple of months have been particularly hectic from a magazine point of view. I've lost track of the number of times I've been out to the airport, most trips associated with new boat releases and other marine-related activity. Some of this is reflected in the latest issue, while you'll have to wait until next issue to see what else we've been up to recently.

My most recent airport visit involved the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show, from which I've just

how the system works and why one boat can outscore another. And speaking of outscoring, congratulations must go to Riviera for its 2007 AMIF Boat of the Year-winning 4700 Sports Yacht – a boat which drew unanimous praise from judges for its innovation, overall build quality and overwhelming 'wow' factor. This boat has cornered the market in 'bling' and is truly a world-class craft that showcases excellence in the Australian boat building industry. And while I'm at it, congratulations to all the other category winners. There were some very close calls in some categories – and many worthy contenders overall – but on reflection I can say with confidence judges got it right on the night.

And while I'm throwing around the congratulations, I'd like to add Jim and Sue Graham to the list, having beaten close to 90,000 other *Club Marine* subscribers and policyholders to the keys of our great Haines Hunter 600 Classic. The winners of our Lifestyle Classic promotion were understandably elated at their prize, which was handed over during the Sanctuary Cove show (see story elsewhere this issue).

I'd also like to draw your attention to the thought-provoking *Thou shalt not fish* piece in this latest issue. Written by internationally recognised marine biologist, Professor Walter Starck, it takes a critical look at the growing trend to establish more and more marine sanctuaries and fishing no-go zones, particularly on the east coast. As Walter says, much of the science used to justify the lock-outs is highly questionable and he uses the example of the grey nurse shark sanctuaries that were announced recently by the NSW government. A recent episode of Channel Nine's *Sunday* show investigated the science behind the sanctuaries and, without going into detail, all I can say is that it raised some serious concerns about the methods – and more concerning – the motives of the scientists and bureaucrats involved. Whatever your position on this emotionally-charged issue, Walter's words make compelling reading.

Speaking of which, there's plenty of great reading on all aspects of our fantastic marine lifestyle in this latest issue. Enjoy.

Cheers,
Chris Beattie,
Managing Editor,
Club Marine Magazine.

An issue full of issues

returned. And if the show was any indication of the state of play in the marine industry, things are indeed looking rosy. No matter what end of the boat market you're in, there are so many quality choices; so many clever boats filling just about every niche imaginable. For a country with a population barely over 20 million, we definitely punch above our weight as far as the range of boats that are available to us goes. Look elsewhere for our comprehensive coverage of the first major boat show of the season – it's a cracker!

Another excuse for clocking up the frequent flyer points came in the form of the 2007 Australian Marine Industries Federation Australian Marine Awards judging. I and several other judges were involved in the selection process spread over two sessions in Sydney and on the Gold Coast. Much effort has gone into revising the overall judging procedures for this year; with more vigorous and detailed scrutiny of entrants' boats and some tweaking of the categories. Judges and the industry had previously agreed to reviewing and upgrading the whole process and, at least from the judges' point of view, I can say that we believe the system is now more rigorous, thorough and fairer.

That said, any system that compares products with the aim of choosing a winner is difficult, if not impossible to perfect. Especially when it comes to picking an overall winner from a fleet of such highly diverse craft. Elsewhere in this issue you'll see a detailed rundown on the judging from the inside in an attempt to dispel some of the scuttlebutt and rumours that occasionally do the rounds of the industry regarding the awards. It will hopefully go some way to explaining

*congratulations
must go to
Riviera for its
2007 AMIF
Boat of the
Year-winning
4700 Sports
Yacht*



Opinion

Thou shalt not fish...



The phrase "Australia rides on the sheep's back" sounds outdated these days, in a nation where 90 per cent of us rarely ever see a sheep, cow or farm. Everyone knows high-tech manufacturing and services are at the core of advanced economies today, and a pristine natural environment is surely more important than the profits of a few primary producers.

However, although this seems to be the general view of much of our mainly urban population, the reality is, in fact, quite different. Australian

manufacturing is in decline. Two decades ago it comprised 18 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Now it is just 13 per cent, while in China it's 39 per cent – and with Asia's cheap labour, this is a trend that's unlikely to change.

In 2005, manufacturing accounted for \$32b of Australian exports, while imports of manufactured goods totalled \$126b. Primary product exports were \$87b, of which \$60b were unprocessed raw materials. Imports of primary products amounted to \$26b. Total exports were \$176b and total

By Dr Walter
Starck



As ever more restrictions are imposed on recreational fishing with almost religious zeal, prominent marine biologist Dr Walter Starck says governments and environmental groups have to be made accountable...

themselves thwarted by complex and ill-conceived environmental regulations, enforced by an often aggressive and uncooperative bureaucracy wielding broad and arbitrary powers of discretion. More and more activity is either blocked entirely or, worse yet, is undertaken at great cost, only to prove unprofitable due to the restrictions and regulations placed upon it. Much of this problem has been masked by a boom in commodities, but like a cancer, this state of affairs is beginning to eat into the vital organs of the economy.

VESTED INTERESTS

Graziers are having their paddocks overtaken by woody scrub they are not permitted to clear. Rural home-owners are finding themselves unable to do anything about an accumulating tinderbox of combustible material just waiting for an inevitable fire to destroy their home. Our recreational and commercial fishing industries, the most lightly impacting in the world, are in decline from ever-increasing restrictions and demands.

In discussing such issues publicly, a question is often raised regarding the importance of an "unspoiled" natural environment. This is almost always posed by urban dwellers far from the natural world, and never by primary producers. Implicit here is the assumption that a problem exists and more regulation is needed. More often than not, either the problem doesn't actually exist at all or the proposed measure is an unnecessarily restrictive means of addressing it. When not explicitly prohibitive, environmental regulations are becoming so insanely complex and costly that the result is the same anyway.

Environmentalism, at its most extreme, has become a quasi-religious blend of new-age nature worship, junk science, left-wing political

imports were \$194b. With our small population and abundance of resources, primary production will clearly continue to underpin our economic wellbeing for the foreseeable future.

THE ECO BURDEN

However, there is a significant impediment to any productive activity that involves natural resources or the environment. All across the nation farmers, graziers, fishermen, miners, developers and just ordinary property owners are finding

activism and anti-profit economics. Environmental salvation now supports a mini-industry of activists, bureaucrats and researchers, all of whom have a vested interest in promoting the concept of ever-increasing threats, which, of course, require more campaigns, more bureaucracy, more research and – especially in the case of recreational and sport fishing – more regulation.

Misinformed politicians, thinking they are doing the right thing and perceiving popularity at little apparent cost, have tended to give rubber stamp approval to the environmentalist agenda. Too often, a charade of democratic process is provided by public consultation with "stakeholders", which somehow is deemed to include activists whose only stake is as self-appointed saviours of the environment. Selected results are then bannered to the extent that they support the agenda, and then ignored or not revealed when they don't. Lapdog 'peak bodies' funded by government furnish a façade of industry consultation, while an unquestioning and pliant media takes the message to the masses.

Environmental management is now dominated by ideology, theories, models and a proliferation of regulation, with minimal regard for actual conditions or socio-economic consequences. There has also been a general acceptance of the 'precautionary principle' as a politically correct cannon of environmental management. This mandates that *any* imagined possibility of a problem must be addressed with overwhelming precautionary measures. One simply can't be too careful when dealing with anything so precious as the environment...

But everything we do or don't do entails risk, and this includes, of course, precautionary measures. Amazingly, this vacuous and pernicious nonsense has actually been written into various legislation, such as the enabling act for the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and legislation protecting wetlands in Queensland.

A Google search of the phrase "precautionary principle", restricted to Australia, returned some 126,000 links. Nowhere else does 'precaution' appear to have been so wholeheartedly embraced as here. The end result has been a proliferation of restrictions to address problems for which there is no evidence of their actual existence.

A Google search of pages from Australia on the phrases "best managed coral reef" or "best

Our fishing industry, the most lightly harvested in the world, is in decline from ever-increasing restrictions and demands

managed fisheries" is also revealing. It turns up numerous links to government, research and environmental organisation websites. Often these self-awarded accolades are modestly qualified by the additional phrase "in the world". However, reality presents a somewhat different picture. While it is true that we have some of the most pristine waters in the world, with little incidence of overfishing, superior management has little to do with it. Management does, however, have everything to do with the fact that we have one of the least productive, most heavily regulated and expensively administered fishery sectors in the world.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT

In the past, maximum sustained yield was the ideal, and monitoring of the fishery itself was the primary methodology employed. Now we have a new generation of fisheries biologists schooled in theories and enthralled by computer models – models whose output is fraught with uncertainty. Typically, they are based on simplistic assumptions and estimates about complex and highly variable phenomena, of which we genuinely understand very little. Usually, they require generous adjustment to yield results that are within the bounds of the possible. In practice, they tend to reflect more the assumptions and aims of the modeller, rather than the facts.

The natural communities upon which our fisheries are based are, in reality, not fragile and delicate but are, in fact, decidedly robust and flexible, and readily recover from frequent natural perturbations. There is little risk in monitoring and addressing problems if and when they become apparent, rather than taking elaborate pre-emptive action to avoid an endless array of possibilities. Testing measures before applying them on a broad scale might be prudent, too, as would assessing their results once implemented.

There is no pressing urgency to impose a rapidly growing morass of restrictions, but there is a very real need to better understand and evaluate what we are doing. In general, a much

Growing waves of protest

In confirmation that the picture I draw is not just my own extreme fringe perspective, here is a random selection of just a few recent quotes from other well-placed observers.

- On 18 July, 2006, an article by Greg Roberts in *The Australian* titled 'Creature Discomforts, wildlife protection laws are hampering development', stated: "The biggest concern of some developers is the so-called precautionary principle: that a development should be modified or prevented if it poses a risk."
- "It is the view of governments that you don't take any risks if you don't have all the facts," says David Finney, Cairns manager of consultancy Natural Solutions. "It's unreasonable. They've gone overboard. For instance, it is difficult for the aquaculture industry to prove that pollution from proposed fish farms will be within prescribed limits. The rules are so strict that, in the case of aquaculture, they are killing the industry."
- Still another article was entitled 'Dignity or Disgrace? – The (latest) mismanagement of Commonwealth Fisheries'. By Peter D Dwyer and Monica Minnegal of the School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Melbourne, the article had this to say: "Increased surveillance, increased punishment and increased costs. No hints of trust, but plenty of illogic. Fishermen cannot guarantee that they will not catch something that they were not targeting. The ocean is too unpredictable. Yet if they catch something but do not hold quota then that's now illegal. If they discard it because they do not hold quota, then that's also illegal. And the compliance officers, relaxing in Canberra, far from the water, will be monitoring all those cameras. It's a bureaucratic *Catch 22*; new rules and regulations that can be enforced, but cannot possibly be obeyed."

– Walter Starck

more empirically-based approach is needed. Management decisions need to be based on *what is actually happening* in a fishery – not on theories and models. Regulation should be imposed only where a demonstrated need exists and results should be evaluated. Much stronger involvement of the industry – both recreational and commercial – in formulating management measures is essential, too.

The whole endeavour has also taken on aspects of the sacred. This manifests itself in language where 'fragile' and 'delicate' have become almost mandatory adjectives in describing the natural world. It is further reflected in the heavy penalties and zealous enforcement of environmental regulations, even when infractions are trivial and no actual damage has been done.

Since expansion of the Green Zones on the Barrier Reef two years ago, some 300 people have been charged with fishing within them. The conviction rate has been an unbelievable 99 per cent. In addition to a hefty fine, the law imposes a mandatory criminal record. Ninety eight per cent of those convicted have been otherwise law abiding citizens with no previous criminal record. They are now banned for life from many activities. Many, if not most, actually caught nothing, but were guilty only of accidentally or ignorantly crossing an imaginary line in the ocean when trolling. They would have been much better off to be caught speeding through a school zone, where the fine would be less and the infringement only a misdemeanour. It seems we value a child's life less than that of a mackerel. Another example of the Green zealotry driving so much of the legislative and punitive agenda...

AN ONGOING DISASTER

Laws to "save" the environment are popular, usually entail little apparent budgetary cost and are unseemly to oppose. They also come highly recommended by the government's own bureaucrats and researchers, as well as publicity-savvy environmental groups.

It all might be seen as just messy old democracy in action, except for one very important omission. Those who will directly be affected usually have little say in the process. Typically, they comprise an unorganised minority, who are easily dismissed as ignorant complainers wanting to despoil our precious environment for their own selfish profit.

They would have been much better off to be caught speeding through a school zone



Australian fisheries are in decline, not from overfishing, but from ill-conceived regulation. Despite having the world's third largest fishery zone, the total Australian catch is similar to that of Finland, Germany, Poland or Portugal, but well below that of New Zealand, France, Ireland and Italy. From six per cent of the global Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) – the area of ocean over which a nation retains commercial and exploratory rights – we produce just 0.2 per cent of the world's catch.

This magnitude of difference goes beyond just poor management. It requires some form of determined rejection of blatantly obvious reality to explain. It's a bit like the decades-long determined insistence of the communist ideal, when the reality was clearly an ongoing disaster. Not coincidentally, that, too, was a consequence of management where ideology and bureaucracy had complete control.

NEEDED REFORMS

The first reform needed is provision for a *real* voice by genuine stakeholders. Having operational and economic decisions made by remote administrators and "experts" devoid of direct practical experience is a proven recipe for bad management.

Another key reform must be to address the lack of bureaucratic accountability for results. Administrators currently have a vested interest in problems, but none in results. Shifting the

bureaucracy toward a more open competitive ecology by removing responsibilities from departments with poor results to those with good ones would also make a huge difference.

The most needed reform in environmental research is the imposition of fundamental standards of scientific conduct appropriate to all science. It means that methods and materials must be made easily accessible to independent examination, that claims are supported by evidence and conflicting claims or evidence are addressed, not ignored or suppressed. A clear distinction should also be made between scientific findings and advocacy using science to claim authority.

One can't say harmful things about individuals with impunity from damage. One can, however, freely employ lies, exaggerations and misrepresentations as well as ignore or even suppress evidence in advocating regulations that result in very real harm to many lives. Greater accountability here is well overdue.

All this is eminently doable with little or no need for new laws. All that is really required is the will to do so. We can't undo the mess that has already unfolded, but we could create a means whereby affected interests can challenge the most damaging mistakes and injustices, perhaps via an independent ombudsman and/or a special judicial tribunal.

COUNTING THE COST

We spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year preventing Asian fishermen from fishing waters we don't use ourselves, while hundreds more are being spent in compensation to pay our own fishermen to go out of business. Another \$1800m per year goes to buying imported seafood we could easily provide ourselves. But this is just fishing; the costs to other areas of primary production and development from incompetent environmental management adds billions more to the bill.

We cannot go on imposing costly and restrictive measures to prevent problems that don't even exist, nor can we ourselves exist without detectable effect on the natural world. Every creature must have its impacts in order to exist, and we are no exception. Aiming to maximise our benefits and minimise our detriments will require trade-offs and balances whereby we seek to spread our impacts across our whole resource base within the bounds of sustainability. Every resource we lock up puts



Science fiction

Allegations of a threat to grey nurse sharks are an example of how good science can be forgotten in the quest to ban fishing.

The grey nurse shark (*Carcharias taurus*) is widespread around the world in subtropical and temperate waters. It is not an endangered species, but is considered to be “threatened” from overfishing. It inhabits coastal waters out to depths of as much as 200 metres. In NSW, it is often seen around certain rocky reefs, where it gathers during the day.

In June, 2003, an underwater survey of 44 such sites by NSW Fisheries found a total of 313 grey nurse sharks at 24 sites. Over the previous year, 24 sharks had been tagged at four sites. In the survey, 19 tagged sharks were sighted. From this it was estimated that the total population in NSW was between 410 and 461 individuals. This result has been widely publicised as indicating a dire threat to the species and, subsequently, a call was made to declare its known aggregation sites as Marine Protected Areas.

A follow-up survey six weeks later in August, 2003, found 162 sharks at 17 out of 24 sites visited. None were tagged. The results of this survey were never published and, on later inquiry, its existence was at first denied. When proof of its existence did emerge, it was then claimed that the results could not be used for population estimates because no tagged sharks were sighted. While it is true that, with no tagged sharks seen, no estimate can be made for the maximum likely population, nevertheless, a *minimum* estimate can be made using the same methodology as used for the June survey. This results in a minimum population of 4000 sharks.

Much depends also upon there not being other substantial populations apart from the popular recreational scuba diving sites that were surveyed. It was claimed that the survey included all significant aggregation sites in NSW. In March this year, Ross Coulthart, a reporter for the Channel 9 *Sunday* news and current affairs programme followed up on rumours that spearfishermen knew of numerous other locations where grey nurse sharks are common. He visited two such sites and obtained beautiful video footage of as many a dozen or more sharks at each location. Divers interviewed said there are many more such sites and fishermen claim to know of still more farther offshore in deeper water.

The grey nurse shark has been chosen as a poster child in the campaign to declare prime offshore diving and fishing sites as MPAs. Fishing is to be banned immediately and the greener Greens have already voiced concerns over disturbance by divers and the noise of motor vessels. Once MPAs are declared, expanding restrictions to address such worries is only an administrative procedure. Inconveniences, like evidence or legislation, are unnecessary. Any imagined threat – plus the precautionary principle – is all that will be required.

The kind of scientific deception and/or incompetence involved in this issue has come to often be associated with environmental issues. Sadly, it now appears we must add scientists to politicians, lawyers and used car salesmen on our “not to be trusted” list.

— Walter Starck

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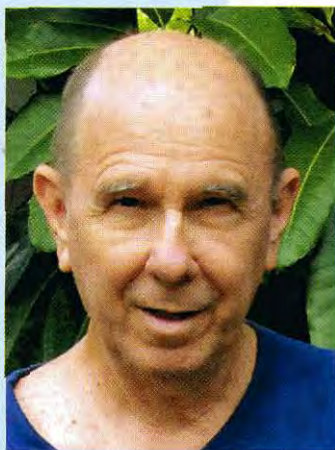


more pressure on others and creates increasing imbalance.

The worst catastrophes tend to not come from obvious dangers everyone foresees, but rather the unrecognised ones that do not become apparent until they are too late to avoid. Environmental mismanagement is eating away at the very heart of our economy. As a threat to long term national security, terrorism is minor in comparison. Unlike terrorism, it is not just something that might happen someday somewhere, in one or a few isolated instances. It is here now, actually happening. It's costing billions and wrecking lives, and it's ongoing, chronic, epidemic – and getting worse... 

A LIFE ON THE WATER

Growing up on an island in the Florida Keys, Dr Walter Starck developed his love of the ocean from an early age. He began diving in 1954 and earned his PhD in marine biology 10 years later, before devoting around 20 years of his life to his



work aboard the research vessel *El Torrito*. Focusing on coral reef biology, he has received grants and contracts from the National Science Foundation, Office of Naval Research and National Geographic Society, among many others, and is a research associate of several high-profile museums and organisations. He has lived in Queensland since 1979, where he now publishes and edits a bi-monthly 'video CD magazine' focused on underwater photography.