

**AUSTRALIAN  
UNIVERSITIES  
QUALITY AGENCY**

**Report of an Audit of  
Australian Maritime College**

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ACTARC	Australian Capital Territory Accreditation and Recognition Council
ADRI	Approach–Deployment–Results–Improvement (a four step quality assurance cycle)
ALC	Academic Liaison Committee
AMC	Australian Maritime College
AMHRC	Australian Maritime Hydrodynamics Research Centre
AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
ARC	Australian Research Council
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CDRC	Course Development and Review Committee
CINEC	Colombo International Nautical and Engineering College
(the) College	Australian Maritime College
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
DE	Distance education
DEST	(Commonwealth) Department of Education, Science and Training
DoTaRS	(Commonwealth) Department of Transport and Regional Services
EB	Enterprise Bargaining
HDR	Higher Degrees by Research
HE	Higher Education
HR	Human Resources
ICTS	Information and Communication Technology Services Section
IEAust	The Institution of Engineers, Australia
ILC	Industry Liaison Committee
IP	Intellectual Property
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs
MNRF	Major New Research Facility
National Protocols	National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (MCEETYA, 2000)
OH&S	Occupational Health & Safety
(the) Review	Australian Maritime College Review (2002)
RHDRC	Research and Higher Degrees by Research Committee
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RRTMP	Research & Research Training Management Plan
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SAI	Self-Accrediting Institution
SAILS	Student Administration and Information Logging System
SETL	Student Evaluation of Teaching & Learning
SMT	Senior Management Team
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training



## OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

### *Background*

In 2002, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an Audit Panel to undertake an academic audit of the Australian Maritime College (AMC). This was the first substantive audit by AUQA of a self-accrediting institution that was not a university.

This Report of the audit provides an overview, and then details the Audit Panel's findings, recommendations and commendations. A brief introduction to AMC is given in Appendix A; the objects of AUQA are shown in Appendix B; and membership of the Audit Panel is provided in Appendix C.

The Audit Panel wishes to note the co-operation that marked each aspect of AMC's approach to audit, including its organisation of the audit visits to its two campuses. The openness and co-operation of those who managed the process, and of those who participated, is gratefully acknowledged.

### *The Audit Process*

AUQA bases its audits on each organisation's own objectives, together with the MCEETYA National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes. The major aim of the audit is to consider and review the procedures an organisation has in place to monitor and achieve its objectives. Full details of the AUQA audit process are available in the [AUQA Audit Manual](http://www.auqa.edu.au) available at <http://www.auqa.edu.au>.

On 23 July, 2002 AMC submitted a [Performance Portfolio](#) and comprehensive supporting documentation describing its strategic directions and the range of mechanisms it has in place to monitor the achievement of objectives and assure and enhance quality across its core activities. The Audit Panel met on 30 August, 2002 to consider these materials. It became clear that although AMC's international activities are expanding, they are not yet sufficiently developed to warrant a separate offshore audit visit by the Audit Panel. The Audit Panel incorporated consideration of relevant off-shore developments into the overall deliberations, but did not specifically focus on this area of activity.

The Audit Panel Chairperson and Audit Director undertook a preparatory visit to AMC on 16 September, 2002. During that visit, clarification of a number of items was effected, additional information was sought and obtained, and arrangements for the audit visit were finalised.

The audit visit took place over 16 to 18 October, 2002. For the first and last days of the visit, the Audit Panel was based at the Newnham Campus, and on the middle day, at the Beauty Point campus, with telephone interviews also being held with a number of students and stakeholders at a distance.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 160 people during the audit visit, including the senior management, academic staff, general and technical staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students (including both domestic and international distance education students), representatives from the College Council, and representatives from the Tasmanian community and industries that the College serves. Given AMC's relatively small size, this involved meeting with a considerable proportion of the College's total staff, and AMC deserves commendation for being able to achieve this without disruption of normal operations. Sessions were also made available for any member of the College community to meet with the Audit Panel, but no one took advantage of this opportunity.

This report relates to the situation current at the time of the audit visit, which ended 18 October, 2002, and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently.

This Report records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by the College as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of AMC's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of the quality assurance system and its procedures, their effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of findings together with lists of commendations and recommendations. These suggest possible improvements and in some cases endorse actions already being undertaken by the College. It is acknowledged that recommendations in AUQA audit reports may have resource implications, and that this can pose difficulties for self-accrediting institutions. Accordingly, AUQA does not prioritise these recommendations, and recognises that it is AMC's responsibility to respond in a manner consistent with the local context.

The structure of this Report is similar to that of AMC's own Performance Portfolio. However, there are some areas where the audit sampling process and the nature of the conclusions reached made this difficult, and thus there are variations in the order of presentation.

### ***AUQA Comment on The Australian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework***

AUQA looks to MCEETYA's National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000) when conducting its audits. For example, Protocol 4 is relevant to all AUQA's institutional audits, as it refers to the responsibilities of any "Australian university or other self-accrediting institution" when it "operates in a distance location" and/or through "an arrangement with another organisation."

Protocol 1 is relevant for Australian universities, as it sets the minimum criteria for recognising a university. AUQA would therefore expect to find that all universities it audits satisfy these criteria. However, AMC is one of just four self-accrediting institutions (SAI) in Australia that is not also a university (the others being The Melbourne College of Divinity, Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School). As such, AMC is not bound by these criteria. Indeed, there are no national standards in the current quality framework specifying minimum requirements for non-university SAIs.

Therefore, the Audit Panel was unable, in conducting its audit, to formally rely upon the criteria as establishing basic expectations of the quality system at AMC. However, given that AMC's aspiration is to attain university status, and given that its objectives and intentions are similar to those found in a university, the Audit Panel chose to interpret Protocol 1 as being implicitly relevant.

It should be noted that although this has highlighted an apparent gap in the coverage of the HE Quality Assurance Framework, this gap has not manifestly impaired AMC in its activity.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Australian Maritime College is a small organisation with an ambitious strategic vision: “achievement of worldwide recognition as a pre-eminent maritime university” (p11, Performance Portfolio). Established by the Commonwealth government in 1978 to provide a concentration of expertise and resources for this sector, it has delivered a range of maritime-related programs in the VET sector and, since 1984, in higher education to students within Australia and from overseas.

In preparing for the audit by AUQA, the AMC undertook a comprehensive self-evaluation, resulting in a Performance Portfolio that was both honest and, by way of recommendations, constructive. It is clear that there is room for improvement in the overall quality management of AMC. The self-evaluation has accurately identified much of the detail of this, and the Performance Portfolio has been approved internally. However, based upon its interviews, the Audit Panel has doubts that the College as a whole (i.e. Council, management and staff) has yet fully understood and accepted the implications of these findings.

AMC is currently characterised by a considerable volume of activity identifying issues requiring improvement and proposing ways forward. In most cases, these issues have been recognised for some time, and the current improvement efforts reflect a commitment to effect a comprehensive change in AMC’s approach to quality management. As such, the Audit Panel often found itself supporting the new intentions, but able to neither verify their effectiveness nor commend the actual current practice. Nonetheless, all journeys must begin somewhere, and the Audit Panel confirmed that AMC is engaged in considerable quality assurance and quality improvement activities that are likely to lead to future benefits.

The management of AMC has recently undergone a thorough and frank external review, and strategies are being implemented for improving the organisational climate and management systems. The Audit Panel congratulates management on the honest and transparent manner in which this demanding review was conducted and responded to. It is now beholden on the staff to similarly rise to the challenge, and work positively with management to achieve the new organisational climate envisaged by the recommendations that have been accepted.

Prior to 1999, AMC chose to have all its programs externally accredited, despite having legal status as a self-accrediting institution in respect of its higher education (HE) programs since 1978. The processes in place for self-accreditation are still in the early stages of development and require considerable attention. Where applicable, professional body accreditation is applied – AMC’s engineering degrees in Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering are externally accredited by the Institution of Engineers, Australia (IEAust).

The VET programs at AMC are subject to a rigorous array of external accreditations. Therefore, the Audit Panel did not attend closely to this area, except to note that AMC has a good record of compliance with external requirements.

AMC’s own reviews have highlighted serious deficiencies in the systems it has in place for assuring and enhancing the quality of its teaching and student learning. This area requires significant attention. As a step in this direction, AMC has recently established a Teaching and Learning Committee.

Notwithstanding these self-identified areas for improvement, AMC’s graduates are highly regarded within the sector, and graduate employment rates are very impressive. Indeed, the maritime industries and AMC’s local communities are very supportive of the AMC and its programs. AMC has enjoyed a close relationship with maritime industries, involving them in developing and reviewing many of its programs. The Audit Panel believes, however, that more work benchmarking curriculum, student outcomes etc. with appropriate organisations worldwide would be an appropriate, if not essential, component of AMC’s quality management system.

Being an educational organisation with a specific focus on maritime industries, AMC's research efforts have, to date, been very focused. The research environment boasts some world-class facilities that have enabled AMC (in conjunction with the University of Tasmania and Defence, Science and Technology Organisation – Maritime Platforms Division) to successfully create the MNRF-supported Australian Maritime Hydrodynamics Research Centre (AMHRC) which, in many respects, is the successor to an earlier CRC. The next stage in this development is to build up the research IP.

Research output to date has been modest and the graduate program very small. In general, the research culture at AMC is still young and developing, and will benefit from a more comprehensive policy framework and supporting infrastructure. AMC has appropriately identified that if it is to remain as a leader in providing high quality education and training for maritime industries then it will need a research and HE capability with which to inform its programs. This provides it with strong incentive to attend to these areas, and the evidence suggests that it is starting to respond well.

AMC has developed innovative means for generating revenue from sources other than DEST and student fees. Its wholly-owned subsidiary, AMC Search Ltd, has proven successful at tailoring and delivering curricula to commercial clients both domestically and internationally.

Human resource management systems at AMC are in need of attention. The Audit Panel found little to commend, although a new management structure may provide the necessary strategic focus and energy.

Library and Information Technology services are *a priori* central to the quality of any higher education institution, and it is clear that AMC needs to prioritise both Library and ICTS as areas in need of additional resources. The manner in which those resources are applied to have optimal effect on high quality service provision will require attention.

The past two years have been very difficult for AMC's management, staff and students. The organisational culture has been under some considerable strain. However, AMC has demonstrated a major shift in focus towards greater self-awareness and corresponding quality improvement efforts. This is necessary for the maintenance of AMC's reputation, particularly as a world-class VET maritime institution, and also as an HE institution seeking to further strengthen its postgraduate and research activities.

Summary lists of commendations and recommendations are provided on the next pages. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the report and are not prioritised by the Audit Panel.

### ***Commendations***

1. AUQA commends AMC for the openness with which it undertook its recent external Review of management and for the manner in which it shared and discussed the draft and final reports..... 14
2. AUQA commends AMC for undertaking a thorough self-review in preparing its Performance Portfolio for audit by AUQA, and also for the wide recognition of a need for improvement strategies. .... 17
3. AUQA commends AMC for the high level of satisfaction employers express with AMC graduates arising from a practical and applied focus to student learning. .... 21
4. AUQA commends AMC for involving external stakeholders, by way of Industrial Liaison Committees, in the curriculum review process. .... 23
5. AUQA commends AMC for its collaborative approach to projects with industry and other educational partners, as evinced in particular by the AMHRC. .... 26

6. AUQA commends AMC for establishing a suite of world-class facilities for teaching, research, and consultancy purposes. ....	27
7. AUQA commends AMC for the establishment of a structure that enables it to exercise effective control over its subsidiary company AMC Search Ltd, as appropriate, and for the company's success to date in generating external revenue. ....	30
8. AUQA commends AMC Search Ltd for a well-developed quality system, including ISO certification, which is relevant to the nature of its business. ....	31
9. AUQA commends AMC for its successes in providing educational services to international markets and thereby diversifying the College's revenue streams. ....	32
10. AUQA commends AMC for the good relationships it has established with its external stakeholders, and especially for strong industry links in the VET area. ....	33
11. AUQA commends AMC for its success in recruiting generally well-motivated and appreciative domestic and international students, and for their efforts to provide campus environments that are supportive of a diverse range of cultures. ....	34
12. AUQA commends AMC for the establishment of Academic Liaison Committees in the programs at Beauty Point. ....	34
13. AUQA commends AMC for embarking upon the Student Administration Continuous Improvement Project, with a view to improving not only its student administration but also its organisational learning capabilities. ....	39

### ***Recommendations***

1. That Council regularly seek externally benchmarked information about the status of AMC's operational and HR systems with a view to better understanding the organisation's current capability and capacity for achieving strategic goals. ....	14
2. That, as it continues to pursue the issues arising from the recent management review, AMC clarify the role of the Task Force in monitoring implementation and follow-up, and continue to note any issues being raised by staff representatives, whether or not these issues were part of the original management review process. ....	15
3. That in the interests of achieving a settled organisational climate, conducive to the pursuit of its more aspirational goals, the AMC take steps to finalise the senior management structure as expeditiously as possible. ....	15
4. That AMC develop a comprehensive system for planning that ensures all work units of the College, and the manner in which they deploy resources, are guided by directional statements that align with the Corporate Plan. ....	16
5. That, in its efforts to attain university status, AMC seek to consolidate its leadership, planning and quality assurance efforts into a streamlined quality management system, and that, in so doing, it benchmarks against the leadership, planning and quality systems of successful dual-sector universities. ....	16
6. That AMC undertake a benchmarking exercise to compare its own suite of policies with those typically found in Australian universities, and use the gaps identified to help establish a policy development program. ....	17
7. That AMC proceed with establishing its Teaching and Learning Committee, and that its mission be accorded the highest priority and resourced appropriately, particularly in terms of pedagogic expertise. ....	19

8. That, in line with good practice for Australian universities, the deployment of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning program should be carefully monitored, with a view to ensuring that the described procedures are consistently implemented across all academic areas. ....	20
9. That AMC undertake an analysis of the capability of its academic staff against the requirements of its academic offerings, with a view to determining and addressing professional development gaps. ....	20
10. That AMC (re)consider how the College's strong industry relevance aligns with its strategy to substantially shift emphasis away from VET toward Higher Education. ....	21
11. That AMC benchmark its accreditation process against that of several Australian universities with a view to bringing it into line with commonly accepted good practice. ....	23
12. That AMC seek to align the academic and service providers associated with distance education and online delivery, such as the relevant academic staff, Library, ICTS, Distance Education staff and the (proposed) Centre for Flexible Learning, and systematically evaluate outcomes from distance education and online provision. ....	25
13. That the Scholarships program be reviewed, particularly with a view to determining whether the College is receiving value for its own investment in the program. ....	25
14. That AMC develop a clear policy and tailored strategies for identifying and pursuing different forms of research and scholarship, in addition to consultancy. ....	26
15. That AMC urgently formalise the research ethics approval processes with the University of Tasmania, ensuring that the process will be sufficiently rigorous to provide a level of assurance equivalent to that of research undertaken within the University itself. ....	27
16. That AMC develop a focus for its research training activities that draws upon the full resources and cross-disciplinary potential of the College. ....	28
17. That AMC undertake an external review of its entry standards and assessment systems for its higher degrees. ....	28
18. That AMC benchmark criteria and guidelines used by a number of Australian universities in relation to supervisor selection and professional development. ....	29
19. That, with respect to staff working for both AMC and AMC Search Ltd, management establish a more transparent process for addressing potential conflicts of interests for staff and for allocating revenue-raising opportunities to suitable staff in an equitable fashion. ....	31
20. That AMC review its policies in respect of Intellectual Property and commercialisation. ....	31
21. That AMC proceed immediately with the development of a new strategic plan for human resource management, which is based upon the goals and values of the College and which would seek to rapidly bring about the major overhaul of the human resource systems necessary to address the current weaknesses AMC itself has identified. ....	35
22. That AMC develop a more systematic and consistent approach to designing, delivering and monitoring the induction and probation processes for new staff. ....	36
23. That AMC review its current approaches to performance management, workload planning, promotions, career and succession planning. ....	37
24. That AMC review its teacher training policy, with a view to establishing a system that is more aligned with the actual professional development and training needs of its teachers. ....	37
25. That AMC ensure that all staff are well versed in clear policies and practices with respect to copyright, particularly covering the different modes of education delivery used by AMC. ....	38

26. That AMC pay further attention to the planning and implementation of processes for the systematic upgrading of its ICTS capability, and associated communication technologies, by the adoption of a rolling program of planned system upgrade, and the establishment of a help desk facility to provide support for system users. ....39



## 1 GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, PLANNING & REVIEW AND QUALITY

### 1.1 *The Context for Audit*

The AMC Corporate Plan 2002-2006 articulates the College's Vision: "To be recognised as the best provider of maritime education and research"; and describes its Mission to be: "The provision of the highest quality education, training and consultancy, and the conduct of applied research of international distinction, to meet the needs of the maritime sector."

The Australian Maritime College (AMC) was established in 1978 to provide a single, national education and training research facility for the maritime industry. As a specialist provider for that industry, AMC is in that small category of 'self-accrediting' higher education institutions that are not also universities. Unlike Australian universities (with the exception of the Australian National University), AMC is governed by Federal rather than State or Territory legislation. It reports to the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS) but receives its operating funding from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

As might be expected, there are a number of differences between AMC and the majority of self-accrediting institutions, such as the relative narrowness of the AMC institutional and programs profile; the strong focus on meeting the needs of a single (albeit broad) industry, rather than a diverse range of industries and professional disciplines; the emphasis given to highly applied and practical studies in the curriculum; and different traditions and academic processes. However, there are also a number of similarities, such as having self-accrediting powers and associated quality assurance responsibilities; the need to generate revenue from a diversity of sources; the adoption of flexible approaches to learning and teaching; the desire to expand into global markets, and the desire to develop an organisational culture that values research and scholarship.

The audit of quality systems by AUQA occurred at a significant moment in AMC's history. Two major projects were underway that had significant bearing on the AUQA audit.

Firstly, the College had recently received a report of a major external review of its management systems, and was in the process of implementing its responses. These responses affect much of the organisation, its culture, and particularly the senior management.

Secondly, the AMC has lodged an application with the Federal Government to be recognised as a university. The Government has responded by establishing a panel whose responsibility is to recommend whether or not AMC ought to receive university status in accordance with Protocol 1. AUQA is clear that such a recommendation is outside the scope of its audit. However, AUQA audits each organisation against its own goals, and AMC has the specific goal of attaining university status. In respect of quality systems, this means that AMC holds itself out as having a quality system comparable to that which one might expect to find in Australian universities. The Audit Panel was cognisant of this aspiration while it formed its commendations and recommendations.

### 1.2 *Governance*

The College is governed by the Council of the Australian Maritime College under the Maritime College Act 1978. Council consists of a Chairperson elected by Council, a maximum of 12 members appointed by the Governor General, a maximum of six members appointed by Council itself, one member elected by the academic staff, one elected by the general staff, and one elected by the students. The Principal/CEO and the Chairperson of Academic Board are *ex officio* members. The Council is responsible for corporate governance and setting the strategic

directions for AMC, and to this end is advised by a Strategic Directions Committee that meets 3-4 times a year. Council monitors organisational performance against the Corporate Plan to meet statutory reporting requirements, involving itself in corporate values, corporate planning, administrative and financial performance, academic performance, internal and external communication, and equity. It also has responsibility for the employment of the Principal/CEO.

The Audit Panel spoke to a number of members of Council, including the Chairperson. The Council has a range of methods in place, formal and informal, to obtain the information it requires to make informed decisions in the fulfillment of its responsibilities. Pleasingly, at a strategic level, there is considerable convergence between the views of Council and those of senior management. These include broadening the academic scope from maritime, to maritime business and then maritime logistics; and expansion of AMC's exploitation of international market opportunities.

However, the Audit Panel was concerned that Council were of the view that the "operational ... and HR management of AMC is excellent." This clearly does not align with the detailed findings presented in both the Performance Portfolio and the AMC Review Report, and led the Audit Panel to review information provided to Council. It concluded that more effort is required to ensure Council is made sufficiently aware of the status of systems within AMC if they are to properly determine the capability and capacity of the organisation to achieve its strategic intentions.

#### **Recommendation 1.**

**That Council regularly seek externally benchmarked information about the status of AMC's operational and HR systems with a view to better understanding the organisation's current capability and capacity for achieving strategic goals.**

In respect of its legislative responsibilities, Council has a framework whereby it regularly assesses the performance of members. The Audit Panel did not review these reviews, but notes that this is consistent with regular practice in respect of one aspect of good governance.

### **1.3 Management**

The Audit occurred shortly after the completion of an external review of the management of the organisation. The review was commissioned as a result of an agreement reached as part of the settlement of the enterprise bargaining negotiations in May 2000, following concerns about the organisational climate. The resulting Australian Maritime College Review Report (McKenzie & Smith, July 2002; hereinafter "the Review") was extensive and to the point, producing a series of recommendations designed to help generate a more positive and constructive organisational culture.

The College's reaction was to make both the draft report (the Issues Paper) and final Review report widely available to staff, thereby helping to maximise the utility of the final outcome. Responses to both versions were invited, and the Council accepted responsibility for approving an official response plan.

#### **Commendation 1.**

**AUQA commends AMC for the openness with which it undertook its recent external Review of management and for the manner in which it shared and discussed the draft and final reports.**

AMC has established a Task Force to help monitor the implementation and follow-up of approved responses to the Review. Agreeing to the establishment of this mechanism shows a

high degree of commitment to transparency on the part of College management. However, at the time of the Audit Panel's visit there was a lack of consensus amongst members of the Task Force as to its precise responsibilities and how they ought to be exercised. The Audit Panel noted that this would need to be clarified urgently if it is to be an effective part of the process. Failure to do so may lead to disillusionment by staff as to the genuineness of management's response to the Review.

#### **Recommendation 2.**

**That, as it continues to pursue the issues arising from the recent management review, AMC clarify the role of the Task Force in monitoring implementation and follow-up, and continue to note any issues being raised by staff representatives, whether or not these issues were part of the original management review process.**

A major outcome of the Review was the decision to revise the College's senior management structure. That process was still under consideration at the time of the Audit Panel's visit, and was planned to be resolved by 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2002. Indeed, it was apparent that there were considerable obstacles to making progress on this important issue. The proposal entails significant change, and it was apparent to the Audit Panel that the College will remain unsettled until final decisions about the senior management structure are approved and implemented.

#### **Recommendation 3.**

**That in the interests of achieving a settled organisational climate, conducive to the pursuit of its more aspirational goals, the AMC take steps to finalise the senior management structure as expeditiously as possible.**

In general, the Audit Panel notes that it received considerable co-operation from the management of the AMC. Although matters of managerial style have been extensively discussed over the past twelve months, the culture of the organisation showed strong and healthy signs of honest self-reflection, a willingness to resolve matters, and a common commitment to the long term viability of the AMC. The Audit Panel left optimistic that the organisational climate was improving. Management has faced up to a difficult and honest process of public feedback and response. The Audit Panel now strongly encourages staff to work positively with management on implementing the new improvement strategies.

### ***1.4 Planning, Review and Quality***

During its visit, the Audit Panel spent several sessions closely examining the arrangements for corporate planning and review, and the emergent Quality Management System at AMC. In these areas there were a large number of simultaneous changes being made, which made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions, or indeed to isolate the impacts of any one change.

Planning has not been a strength of the College's management system. The current Corporate Plan is viewed within AMC as being too rigid and lacking staff support. Faculties annually establish documents called operational plans against allocated budgets. This was described by senior staff as a "quasi-formal planning process". In reviewing the documents and interviewing management and staff, the Audit Panel concluded that the "integrated planning cycle (Performance Portfolio, p21)" is considerably less structured and useful than this term suggests. The College has identified the need to develop a new Corporate Plan using a more consultative process. The Audit Panel suggests that the ultimate utility of this plan will be greatly enhanced by a systematic approach to integrated planning throughout the College.

#### **Recommendation 4.**

**That AMC develop a comprehensive system for planning that ensures all work units of the College, and the manner in which they deploy resources, are guided by directional statements that align with the Corporate Plan.**

In addition to external accreditation requirements for some of its *programs and courses* (see Section 2.5), AMC is subject to a number of *institutional* review mechanisms, most notably: audits against AQTF standards by the Tasmanian Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training (OPCET); annual reporting to DoTaRS and DEST; implementing (voluntarily) the International Safety Management (ISM) Code for vessels; and the AUQA audit itself. This list is particularly extensive given AMC's dual sector status and its unique placement within DoTaRS. As a consequence, the need for a comprehensive internal system of quality management is critical. The Audit Panel found considerable effort being made in this regard, but to date it has not resulted in a comprehensive system. This has been, in part, caused by: the complexity of the task; the frequent turnover in personnel dedicated to the quality function; and an unsettled organisational climate.

There is no question that the College is trying very hard in this area. A Quality Management Advisory Group (QMAG) has been established to provide steerage, although the Audit Panel was exposed to conflicting views from members as to the role and continuance of this body, and as to the nature of the College's quality management system(s) itself. For example, the Audit Panel was presented with directly conflicting statements as to whether the College was pursuing ISO 9001:2000 certification as part of its quality system, or whether future development of the system would be driven by compliance audit, or by an approach based on local continuous improvement teams. In another example, the Audit Panel was advised on the one hand that QMAG was established to co-ordinate efforts for the AUQA audit and would then disband; and on the other hand that it had an ongoing role in coordinating AMC's Quality Management System. There were also conflicting views about the respective roles of QMAG and the Academic Board in reviewing and improving academic quality assurance policies and practices.

The Audit Panel was left with the clear impression that, although there is considerable goodwill throughout AMC to get this right, there is a need for strong professional leadership and co-ordination in the area of quality management.

#### **Recommendation 5.**

**That, in its efforts to attain university status, AMC seek to consolidate its leadership, planning and quality assurance efforts into a streamlined quality management system, and that, in so doing, it benchmarks against the leadership, planning and quality systems of successful dual-sector universities.**

The Audit Panel notes that the QMAG has recently established a Planning & Benchmarking Working Group that may assist in this regard, although it was too early for the Audit Panel to reach any conclusions about this development.

The need for professional leadership in this area has not meant that the College has been idle. AMC has been engaged in an exhaustive series of self-evaluative and external evaluation processes over the past two years. Internally, these have included a series of thematic self-reviews using the ADRI model, and a trial self-assessment using the McKinnon, Walker & Davis Benchmarks (which AMC concluded were suitable for use within the College).

AMC rated itself as above average in less than one third of total benchmarks and key benchmarks. One summary conclusion was: "it would seem that the 6 broad areas where there is considerable work to be done to achieve the benchmark represent those areas critical to the

achievement of AMC's vision" (AMC Trial Self-Assessment Benchmark Study, 13 Sept 2000). The Audit Panel formed the view that this process had been undertaken honestly and would provide the College with clear areas to prioritise for attention. The Audit Panel noted that the benchmarking activity had been primarily in the form of self-evaluation against specified topic areas; it suggests that for the College to claim world class status it ought to be using robust comparisons with maritime universities internationally to publicly demonstrate its standing.

#### **Commendation 2.**

**AUQA commends AMC for undertaking a thorough self-review in preparing its Performance Portfolio for audit by AUQA, and also for the wide recognition of a need for improvement strategies.**

QMAG has also recommended the establishment of an on-line Document Library that would provide a consolidated repository of information about governance, management, planning and review, quality assurance and policies. This was not properly in place at the time of the Audit, and the Audit Panel notes that such a system will only be as effective as the processes that feed information into it and draw information from it. Nonetheless, it is a very positive contribution to the overall Quality Management System, and one to be encouraged.

### **1.5 Policy Framework**

Guidelines have recently been drafted for the structure of policies, and for the procedures for approving, reviewing and measuring the effectiveness of policies. These have been based upon practices at universities with more established approaches. It is far too soon to reach conclusions of the effectiveness of the proposed system. Indeed, the proposal has not yet translated into a generally known or used approach within the College. Nonetheless, the Audit Panel formed the view that this was an appropriate and encouraging development.

As another important aspect of its overall policy management, the Audit Panel advises that AMC should identify whether it has an appropriately comprehensive suite of policies in place. The Audit Panel found numerous instances, particularly regarding research, where there were gaps in policy provision (these are elaborated later in this report). In pursuing its goal of attaining university status, it will be necessary for the College to demonstrate that it has a mature suite of policies adequate to the maintenance of high standards in research and in teaching and learning. The Audit Panel was not satisfied that this suite is yet comprehensive.

#### **Recommendation 6.**

**That AMC undertake a benchmarking exercise to compare its own suite of policies with those typically found in Australian universities, and use the gaps identified to help establish a policy development program.**

### **1.6 Financial Framework**

Governing a small and focused institution with requirements for expensive facilities, the AMC Council is aware that financial resources need to be sought from a diverse range of sources, and targets for these are enumerated in the Corporate Plan (2002-2006). There are some examples of this being achieved, such as in respect of international activities (see Section 4).

Nonetheless, AMC finds itself with a significant financial deficit. In part, this deficit became compounded by virtue of a reporting method that did not clearly reflect the actual financial position of the College. Council advised the Audit Panel that, in response, it has changed the reporting system and approved a five-year deficit reduction strategy, commencing in 2002 (a recalibration from earlier plans reported in AMC's latest Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan targeting deficit reduction by the end of 2004), which at the same time also seeks to

maintain financial reserves. Its governance role in this regard is now supported by quarterly reports, including forecasts to the end of financial year. Council also utilises a Finance Audit & Property Committee that, *inter alia*, receives reports from both external auditors and an (outsourced) internal audit function.

Within the management of the College, budgets are allocated annually and responsibility is delegated to budget centre managers, who have online access to their centre's financial reports, which are updated monthly. However, as mentioned above (see Section 1.4), improvement is required in the integration of budgets and planning. Having a significant deficit means that the financial support of strategic priorities is dependent upon a robust system of planning and resource allocation, and such a system is not yet fully developed. AMC has recognised that a comprehensive resource allocation model is required, along with improvements in approaches to costing.

The AUQA audit occurred towards the end of the first year of the deficit reduction strategy's implementation. The Audit Panel was not mandated to undertake a thorough financial systems audit and has no comment about the likely efficacy of systems for achieving the deficit reduction. However, it does appear that AMC has work to do ensuring its financial management system is adequate to support its emerging overall quality management system.

## 2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

### 2.1 *Teaching Policy and Practice*

AMC recognises that it would benefit from a Teaching & Learning Plan. An *ad hoc* Teaching & Learning Working Party of the Academic Board prepared a précis of the current status of teaching and learning at the College. Its report was alarming. The following list is compiled from extracts found throughout the Working Party's report (of 16 September, 2002), and is by no means a complete list of the self-criticisms contained therein:

- there is no overall coherent strategy for Teaching and Learning and there is no consistency of approach;
- documentation with regard to Teaching and Learning is fragmented and largely unknown;
- there is no clearly articulated process for achieving AMC's ... standards and benchmarks;
- mechanisms for monitoring teaching practice needed to be developed;
- academic induction is non-existent;
- there is no sharing of good teaching practices;
- some teaching practices are very outdated and there are no clear mechanisms to encourage/motivate staff to improve their pedagogic skills;
- there is little communication on Teaching and Learning matters

The Working Party concluded that AMC ought to establish a Teaching and Learning Committee to address these issues.

The Audit Panel took this report very seriously and searched for evidence that would corroborate or refute these findings. Upon completion of its deliberations, the Audit Panel found itself largely in agreement with these findings, with the qualified exception that AMC is making a serious attempt to address pedagogic skills, noting that the effectiveness of this attempt is questionable (see Section 7.5). Indeed, further concerns were identified that the report did not include. For example, although Departmental heads told the Audit Panel that new staff were allowed three months before being allowed to teaching independently of supervision, the Audit Panel found clear evidence that this is often not the case, and that some staff commence teaching duties without any academic induction. This also applies to HDR students undertaking teaching loads.

Whilst positively acknowledging that the College has now identified many of the issues, it is of considerable concern that matters are in such a state. Urgent attention is required.

#### **Recommendation 7.**

**That AMC proceed with establishing its Teaching and Learning Committee, and that its mission be accorded the highest priority and resourced appropriately, particularly in terms of pedagogic expertise.**

The Audit Panel was not privy to the Terms of Reference of the proposed new Teaching and Learning Committee, and from its own findings suggests that within its scope should be matters such as determining: minimum entry standards and appropriate RPL; standards for different delivery methods; graduate attributes and assessment of student learning outcomes; and required pedagogic skills for staff.

## 2.2 *Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning*

The College has adopted a compulsory student evaluation of teaching process entitled “Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL).” AMC’s version of the SETL program is similar to teaching and learning student feedback programs now found in most Australian universities. SETL was reviewed in 2001, with assistance from external parties.

The Audit Panel considered the new SETL system and found it to be reasonably sound in design. In practice, however, its usage is subject to considerable variance throughout the College, and as a consequence its utility is not being optimised. In some areas the results are forwarded to Faculty Directors, and Heads of Programs but not necessarily the academic staff member whom they most concern (in contrast to the documented process), whereas at Beauty Point, the Academic Liaison Committees (see Section 6.2) provide a forum whereby SETL results can be discussed in a constructive context. On a Likert-type scale seeking ratings from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) against positively-expressed items, AMC’s practice is to accept a score from 3 to 5, whereas a score below 3 may result in follow-up by way of filing remedial action forms. AMC does not have a policy regarding why 3 is an acceptable score, given that it indicates a “neutral” response. Moreover, whereas the system (if not the practice) enables follow-up for unsatisfactory teaching, there is no follow-up for good teaching; the Teaching Excellence Awards, for example, are not linked to SETL. Also, no use is made of the SETL data in aggregated form to identify professional development needs or possible changes to course curricula. AMC’s position is that staff use their personal information for improvement purposes within the context of staff appraisal, and while this probably happens for some staff, the Audit Panel notes that this is dependent upon staff receiving their results and participating in an appraisal process (see Section 7.4).

Many variances will likely be a consequence of the recentness of the review. However, if SETL is to be an effective component of the Colleges quality management system, then the consistency of its implementation will need to be attended to.

### **Recommendation 8.**

**That, in line with good practice for Australian universities, the deployment of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning program should be carefully monitored, with a view to ensuring that the described procedures are consistently implemented across all academic areas.**

## 2.3 *AMC as a Dual Sector Institution*

AMC provides courses in both Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE). As of June 2002, the ratio of HE/VET students is 52/48 ([Performance Portfolio](#), p37). Staff teach in both sectors and are on a single pay scale. There appears to be some understanding amongst the academic staff of the pedagogic differences of HE and VET, although there are no systems to facilitate this awareness or promote good practices in either case. Moreover, perhaps as a result of the College’s size, some staff are required to teach in a range of disciplines including, according to statements made by staff to the Audit Panel, some in which they have no qualifications or experience.

### **Recommendation 9.**

**That AMC undertake an analysis of the capability of its academic staff against the requirements of its academic offerings, with a view to determining and addressing professional development gaps.**

The College states that it “aspires to increase (in the medium term), the ratio of higher education to vocational educational students to 80/20” (p12, [Performance Portfolio](#)). This statement was subsequently further elaborated to relate to the profile Commonwealth grant funded students,

given that there may still be additional fee-paying VET students. Building its higher education profile is sensible in pursuit of the goal of achieving university status, although for such a significant aspiration, it is a surprising omission from the Corporate Plan. The Audit Panel found that this aspiration, in both its formulation and the strategies designed for its achievement, is not well supported by the evidence. For example, many well-established dual sector universities have a proportion of VET students considerably higher than 20%, raising doubts as to the basis for such a stretch target. Moreover, the Audit Panel met a good number of representatives from the College's local communities and current stakeholders. Many deemed the College's greatest value to be its VET programs, for which it has a strong brand, good industry linkages and a track record of success with graduate employment rates. AMC is in danger of jeopardising this support if it is perceived as demoting VET as an institutional priority. The Audit Panel does note that AMC has also received strong support for its aspirations from other industry and community quarters; it is concerned that the College is listening solely to such support and not also paying due attention to the concerns of other stakeholders.

#### **Recommendation 10.**

**That AMC (re)consider how the College's strong industry relevance aligns with its strategy to substantially shift emphasis away from VET toward Higher Education.**

#### **2.4 *Attributes of an AMC Graduate***

At the time of the audit visit, AMC Academic Board had not completed work on developing and approving a definitive set of AMC Graduate Attributes. The Audit Panel noted that this work was expected to be completed by February 2003 and encourages the Academic Board to meet this target. In particular, AMC acknowledges that its policies and practices with respect to graduate attributes for DE students are not well developed, and this requires attention.

As a specialist national provider of education, training, research, and consultancy for the maritime industry, AMC must necessarily provide a full range of industry-relevant VET programs as well as HE programs. In particular, the applied and practical nature of its approach to teaching and learning, primarily in VET but also regarding its HE programs, has earned AMC a reputation for consistently turning out 'industry-ready' graduates. Because of this applied approach, the graduates are highly regarded and keenly sought after by employers in the maritime industry. AMC points to its high employment rate for graduates (virtually 100% for some programs) as evidence of the quality of its education. The Audit Panel congratulates AMC for this success. It also cautions AMC to not over-rely on this as an indicator of 'quality' *per se*, particularly given that, according to industry representatives who met with the Audit Panel, there is a general shortage of graduates (no benchmark data of graduate employment compared with other maritime-related education providers was offered to the Audit Panel). Nonetheless, as an indicator of graduate employment it is a notable achievement.

#### **Commendation 3.**

**AUQA commends AMC for the high level of satisfaction employers express with AMC graduates arising from a practical and applied focus to student learning.**

#### **2.5 *Accreditation, Re-accreditation and Review of Programs***

AMC is a self-accrediting institution (SAI), meaning that it is authorised (by AMC Statute No.6, Courses and Awards, 1979) to establish and offer award programs (such as degrees and diplomas) without requiring additional external approval for each program. In this way, it has powers similar to those of a university.

Notwithstanding its SAI status, historically most program accreditations (that were not already provided by professional bodies) were undertaken by the Australian Capital Territory Accreditation and Recognition Council (ACTARC). This arrangement ceased in 1999. AMC states that it chose to stop referring its HE programs to ACTARC for accreditation at that time because ACTARC moved towards a competency-based model that AMC deemed inconsistent with its attribute-based direction. AMC started conducting internal accreditations at that point.

A number of programs are also subject to professional accreditations. AMC's engineering degrees in Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering are externally accredited by the Institution of Engineers, Australia (IEAust).

The Audit Panel considered the process by which internal accreditation occurs. It is largely based upon external models of accreditation. Programs of more than two years equivalent full time duration progress through three stages. Firstly, they must receive 'Preliminary Accreditation'. When the first cohort of students is midway through the program, 'Provisional Accreditation' is sought. Upon graduation of the first cohort, 'Full Accreditation' is sought. The first stage requires extensive information, with each successive stage requiring such additional information as is available through the experience of a live cohort.

The Audit Panel formed four serious concerns about the process. These are detailed as follows.

Firstly, in reviewing the schedule of programs and accreditations, it became apparent that a small number of programs have been offered without proper accreditation. For example, the MBA (Marine Resource Management) has graduated two students but has not yet been accredited. AMC acknowledges this, and expresses certainty that this will no longer occur. The Audit Panel, however, was not convinced that the overall process is sufficiently tight to provide assurance of this. Generally, this is a result of a culture that is still relatively new to self-accreditation.

Secondly, the Preliminary Accreditation stage is conducted in parallel with a resource-focused approval process via the Senior Management Team (SMT). This is entirely appropriate. However, the Audit Panel reviewed a number of official documents that contained conflicting statements as to whether Preliminary Accreditation, SMT approval, or both were required before a program could be marketed. For example, the policy entitled Course Development and Review – New Courses states that "when SMT approval is received, the Publicity and Promotions area, in consultation with the Course Coordinator, promotes the course." However, the document entitled Accreditation of Tertiary Courses stated that "Preliminary Accreditation must be completed before advertising promotion begins." It is essential that this is clarified in both policy and practice. The consequences, for example, of students being enrolled into unaccredited programs could be serious. The Audit Panel recommends that a prudent approach would be to ensure that policies and practice require both approvals to be required prior to any recruitment on to a new program.

Thirdly, the Audit Panel could find no compelling reason for a three-stage accreditation process, and indeed found that not only does this involve excessive bureaucracy, but that there are inherent risks associated with it. This model is common for external accrediting agencies, such as professional bodies, but is uncommon for SAIs. A student is entitled to be assured that a program undertaken at an SAI is fully accredited by that SAI, before the program commences. However, according to AMC's system, the first cohort of students completes a program that is only Provisionally – not Fully – Accredited. The existence of an accreditation stage presumes the possibility of failing that stage, in which case a Provisionally Accredited program cannot be said to have the same status as a Fully Accredited program.

The Audit Panel suggests that AMC should consider moving to a single accreditation process, to be completed prior to offering the program for the first time. For such a process to be sufficiently robust, external input into the initial accreditation process would be a desirable enhancement over

current practice. This should then be followed by a regular schedule of reaccreditation, say every five years, ensuring the program is kept current and relevant and remains viable.

Such a streamlined process would avoid both excessive work and risk. However, it raises the Audit Panel's fourth concern. The College's accreditation system is still too young to have a re-accreditation component established. Given that 2002 is the fourth year in which AMC has been accrediting its own programs, the re-accreditation process needs to be established with some urgency. The reaccreditation process would comprise a major review of the program and formal approval for its continuance. This may be augmented annually with less intensive program review (for example, monitoring against appropriate – preferably benchmarked – KPIs). There has been a course review cycle in place, supported by a Course Review Resource Kit (aka AMC Resource Kit) but, by AMC's own admission, its robustness is questionable. The Audit Panel found very few staff were aware of, or had used the Kit, and its utility appears to have atrophied.

The Course Development Review Committee (CDRC) has carriage of the College's accreditation system. It has recently acknowledged a number of these issues and is looking to address them in the short term.

#### **Recommendation 11.**

**That AMC benchmark its accreditation process against that of several Australian universities with a view to bringing it into line with commonly accepted good practice.**

Despite the above, one of AMC's major strengths in quality assurance relates to program review. AMC uses external stakeholders in Industry Liaison Committees (ILCs), which meet periodically to review academic programs. Each ILC meets for a full day to review a number of programs, and provides expert external input into the relevance and appropriateness of the curriculum. AMC is currently reviewing ways in which programs may be grouped to make this process more efficient.

There is room to improve this system, which is not managed according to a tight schedule to ensure all programs are reviewed in an appropriate and timely manner; nor is it currently integrated into a re-accreditation process. Nonetheless, the Audit Panel obtained sufficient evidence to conclude that the ILCs are quite active and provide valuable input into the College's academic activity. Indeed, the ILCs would be a valuable component of many SAIs' quality systems. AMC's quality system will be considerably strengthened if AMC is able to incorporate the value of ILCs' input into a reaccreditation process across all of its courses.

#### **Commendation 4.**

**AUQA commends AMC for involving external stakeholders, by way of Industrial Liaison Committees, in the curriculum review process.**

The Audit Panel was also presented with several examples where industry has assisted with the development of new courses, such as Patricks and P&O assisting with the development of new stevedoring courses. These examples were very encouraging, and provide evidence of a College that is both valued by, and liaises closely with, its major industry stakeholders.

In regard to the VET courses, AMC is subject to audits and accreditations of various forms. Some courses are externally accredited by the Australian Capital Territory Accreditation and Recognition Council (ACTARC); others by the Institute of Marine Engineers (UK). Certificate level seafaring or 'certificate of competency' courses are accredited by the state authority, Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST). The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) annually audits AMC to "ensure that courses offered by maritime training organisations, and outcomes for Australian certificates of competency are in accordance with the requirements of the International

Maritime Organisation's Standard of Training and Certification of Watchkeepers (STCW) Convention" (Performance Portfolio, p44). The AMC performs well against these mandatory requirements.

## 2.6 *Flexible Modes of Delivery*

AMC is increasing its involvement as a provider of distance education (DE) services to students in a variety of locations around the world, including on vessels at sea. This poses some interesting challenges, and AMC has had some success in this regard, evidenced by steady growth in distance education enrolments over the past three years, and a significant increase, albeit from a low base, in courses offered by distance. The Audit Panel spoke with distance education students and detected a generally high level of satisfaction. The Distance Education Officers received some commendation, and indeed, these staff members have been recognised with the AMC's General Staff Award.

The opportunity now is for the staff involved to further develop a multifunctional team-based approach. The Audit Panel formed a view that there is insufficient communication and collaboration between the various parties involved in the provision of educational services to students at a distance. Notwithstanding the General Staff Award citation, the Audit Panel found no overall system for encouraging the DE Officers, Library, ICTS and academic staff to pursue a team approach to provision, even though all parties are involved. One notable example of this relates to the surveying of DE subjects, wherein the results are not necessarily circulated to all those who have a direct interest in their content, including the contributing academic staff (see also Recommendation 8, Section 2.2).

The College has had little experience to date in the use of online technologies. All students now have email, and the e-Library services have been available since 2002. Some use is being made of WebCT, although mainly as a repository for materials rather than as a technology facilitating interactive learning. At the time of the Audit Panel's visit, AMC offered just one program (in e-commerce) online. The primary staff member responsible is not an employee of AMC, which reduces the College's ability to effectively meet the needs of these students. This course is compulsory, and not offered via any other mode. The compulsory nature of a course in a single mode reduces the concept of flexibility rather than increases it, and the College will need to plan more carefully the manner in which it seeks to utilise different modes for the benefit of its students.

Fortunately, there is some awareness that a large scale move to online delivery needs to be thought through carefully. A Working Group on Flexible Learning set up by the Academic Board reported that the College's practices in this area to date had been *ad hoc* and modest. It reported that development of greater on-line capabilities was essential, but that this would be a considerable undertaking, involving strategic, pedagogic, resourcing, training and EB issues. In a separate and apparently unrelated exercise, a draft "Quality Assurance Model for Overseas and 'Off Campus' Delivered Courses" has been recommended to Academic Board, but at the time of the audit was not fully implemented.

In general, the Audit Panel formed the view that the College's activities in flexible learning are *ad hoc*, lacking in a coherent strategy and the consequence of innovative individuals operating outside a more team-based approach. Notwithstanding the comment about lack of integration, the Audit Panel was greatly encouraged by the above mentioned reports but notes that there is much to be done before a sound system is in place which encompasses a broad scope of flexible learning at AMC.

**Recommendation 12.**

**That AMC seek to align the academic and service providers associated with distance education and online delivery, such as the relevant academic staff, Library, ICTS, Distance Education staff and the (proposed) Centre for Flexible Learning, and systematically evaluate outcomes from distance education and online provision.**

**2.7 Scholarships**

AMC has a corporate objective to “increase the number of undergraduates and postgraduate scholarships offered by AMC” (Corporate Plan 2002-2006), and it is making progress in this area. There are currently 31 students with undergraduate scholarships. This is viewed as evidence that the scholarships program is supporting AMC’s goal to increase the proportion of HE students. It certainly is viewed in positive terms by recipients and the College’s stakeholders in general.

The efficacy of scholarships for AMC is difficult to determine. There has been no assessment to date of the academic or economic benefits of the scholarships program. Also, evidence has emerged making AMC aware of a bias in favour of engineering students that requires attention. The Scholarships program is not yet four years old, and this was provided as a reason why it has not yet been reviewed. The Audit Panel supports the intention to provide a scholarships program, but notes that the College has no system in place for determining whether, as currently arranged, the program is effective.

**Recommendation 13.**

**That the Scholarships program be reviewed, particularly with a view to determining whether the College is receiving value for its own investment in the program.**

### 3 RESEARCH, RESEARCH TRAINING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

#### 3.1 *Research*

The relevant goal in the AMC Corporate Plan 2002-2006 is: “To expand the amount of high quality research activity of value to Australian and global maritime and ocean-based environments and activities.” Just like universities, AMC is required to prepare and submit a Research and Research Training Management Report each year for consideration by DEST.

Research leadership at AMC is the responsibility of the Research and Higher Degrees by Research Committee (RHDR). The RHDR acknowledges that the establishment of a research culture at AMC is still in its infancy. DEST figures for 2001 show only 12 staff were classified as research active, and seven of these were also engaged in teaching. Output and external research revenue to date have been low in absolute terms and below targets. For example, a prominent member of the RHDR has suggested an appropriate benchmark of attracting 10% of the external revenue attracted by the University of Tasmania (based on proportional size), but AMC is not yet achieving this target.

There has been one significant success. In conjunction with its partners The University of Tasmania and Defence, Science and Technology Organisation – Maritime Platforms Division, AMC won a \$4.5 million AusIndustry grant to establish the Australian Maritime Hydrodynamics Research Centre (AMHRC), which is, in some respects, the successor to an earlier Maritime Engineering CRC. AMC’s main contribution at this stage is its facilities (see Section 3.3) and the next stage in this development is to build up the research IP.

#### **Commendation 5.**

**AUQA commends AMC for its collaborative approach to projects with industry and other educational partners, as evinced in particular by the AMHRC.**

The College has had some success with ARC applications. For example, in collaboration with The University of Tasmania, an ARC grant was secured for 2002 and another for 2003 (one led by AMC; the other by The University of Tasmania). In addition, AMC has recently appointed a research staff member who brings to the College a third ARC grant.

Except for these ARC grants and the AMHRC, the research culture is young and underdeveloped. Moreover, what constitutes ‘research’ is subject to wide interpretation amongst the staff. At present, there is no clear policy for defining different types of research output and targeting particular types for development. While the research culture is young, this may assist with establishing achievable goals appropriate to the nature of the organisation, and establishing tailored support strategies. At present, the emphasis on generating consultancy income appears to be at the expense of developing a research culture.

#### **Recommendation 14.**

**That AMC develop a clear policy and tailored strategies for identifying and pursuing different forms of research and scholarship, in addition to consultancy.**

An Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS) has provided financial support for research projects by staff and HDR students alike. Also, the college has recently appointed a Research Analyst, who assists with grant applications and communicates regularly with all staff and postgraduate

students about research funding and conference opportunities. This is a positive development that will assist with the development of the research culture.

### 3.2 *Ethics*

One of the most important policy areas for a research institution is to ensure that all research is carried out having due regard for ethical considerations. AMC does not have its own policy and process in place for ensuring that research involving humans or animals (including fish) receive appropriate ethics approval. An informal agreement exists with the University of Tasmania, whereby research-active staff at AMC may submit their research proposals to the University's various ethics committees for approval.

In general, the Audit Panel found that the research culture at AMC has a low awareness of ethics, with little in the way of ethics training seminars or in-house ethics expertise to draw upon. In many cases, the nature of research undertaken at AMC will not require ethics approvals; however, there is an intention to increase research in areas where it may be required (such as fisheries; the psychology of marine bridge crew; and research involving the surveying of human subjects). The Audit Panel found no evidence of a system for ensuring that all research, including postgraduate student research, is subject to checks as to whether ethics approvals are required.

For an institution looking to increase its research activity, this is an area requiring urgent attention. In the absence of a sufficient base of staff with appropriate ethics and research knowledge and experience, it is appropriate that AMC continue to develop its relationship with another provider, such as the University of Tasmania.

#### **Recommendation 15.**

**That AMC urgently formalise the research ethics approval processes with the University of Tasmania, ensuring that the process will be sufficiently rigorous to provide a level of assurance equivalent to that of research undertaken within the University itself.**

### 3.3 *Research Facilities*

The Audit Panel inspected a number of facilities which constitute the core of AMC's research and development infrastructure. These included the 60 metre Towing Tank (planned to be extended to 100 metres); Integrated Marine Simulator and Machinery Space Simulator; Cavitation Tunnel; Model Test Basin and a Flume Tank. The AMC also operates a number of training vessels. These facilities equip AMC well by international standards, and underpin the research, consultancy and (to a lesser extent) teaching activities. There is constant pressure on the College to justify the financial cost of these resources, which has led to increased commercial use of them at the expense of their contributions to teaching and research. Nonetheless, they position AMC well, providing opportunities that are beyond other maritime providers. Indeed, the Cavitation Tunnel, Flume Tank, Towing Tank and Integrated Marine Simulator form the nucleus of AMC's successful bid for the AMHRC.

#### **Commendation 6.**

**AUQA commends AMC for establishing a suite of world-class facilities for teaching, research, and consultancy purposes.**

### 3.4 *Research Training*

AMC is slowly building a higher degrees by research (HDR) profile. It has a number of courses at Masters level, including Masters by research, and a PhD program. Student progress is monitored by way of six monthly reports and student surveys.

The Audit Panel met a number of HDR students who advised that there is no research training induction, no program of research seminars (other than for assessment purposes) and no systems for encouraging cross-disciplinary interaction with other postgraduate students. They believe that there are opportunities within the College, but that a silo mentality is preventing opportunities of cross-disciplinary research from being realised. This corresponds with a strong impression that the Audit Panel formed during its audit visit. By contrast, the collaboration that resulted in the successful AMHRC proposal shows that the College, on one level, is capable of such internal collaboration. The Audit Panel could not find evidence of extending this capability to develop a clear strategy for addressing this issue in regard to postgraduate students. In particular, given the narrow scope of disciplinary expertise and the limited number of staff capable of providing supervision to doctoral standards, the AMC needs to develop a concentration of research activity designed to foster HDR students and maximise use of resources.

#### **Recommendation 16.**

**That AMC develop a focus for its research training activities that draws upon the full resources and cross-disciplinary potential of the College.**

The Audit Panel was concerned that AMC has introduced a process whereby Masters students can progress to a PhD without first completing their Masterate, provided that they meet the satisfaction of the RHDRC. The normal processes of assessment and external examination are thus bypassed. The Audit Panel learned that some students have already been offered, and taken up, this option. Progression from Masterate to Doctorate level study without completing the Masterate is a feature of a mature system, commonly practiced in universities that have had considerable experience granting higher degrees. However, as AMC has only graduated one PhD student and thirteen Masters by research to date, it may not have built up a sufficient depth of experience in assessing graduate level study to confidently operate such a system. Moreover, its HDR enrolments in 2002 (23) are at their lowest since 1999, and AMC acknowledges that research completions are at an unsatisfactory level. Although the College will no doubt wish to raise its number of PhD students, the Audit Panel suggests that, from a quality assurance perspective, AMC ought first to establish a graduate system that is demonstrably robust in the eyes of external peers.

#### **Recommendation 17.**

**That AMC undertake an external review of its entry standards and assessment systems for its higher degrees.**

A number of HDR students have taken advantage of the College's IGS Australian Postgraduate Award (APA), International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS) and various AMC, industry and research-grant related scholarships. They said that they had good access to office space and computing resources compared with HDR peers in some universities, indicating the effort AMC is making in building up a research training profile.

HDR students are also positive about the ample teaching work opportunities available to them at AMC. This is typical of a small institution with limited resources, and there is obvious benefit to the HDR students in terms of income. The Audit Panel was very concerned, however, that they are teaching without any academic induction or teaching support (see Sections 2.1 & 7.3).

### 3.5 *Research Supervision*

AMC, in its Corporate Plan, outlines its goal to expand its HDR activity by 20% per annum. It advised the Audit Panel that it has 23 staff (about 25%) qualified to supervise HDR students, and that half of these staff are currently engaged as supervisors. This indicating that there is room to grow and also to accommodate difficulties that arise for HDR students as a result of staff turnover.

At the same time, AMC rates its growth potential in research as “low” (Performance Portfolio, p13), and a number of students interviewed by the Audit Panel did advise of difficulties they were having obtaining appropriate supervision within the College, with some being adversely affected by staff turnover and others being dependent upon the research expertise coming from supervisors external to AMC.

RHDRC, which is responsible, *inter alia*, for ensuring “that continuity in supervision can be maintained for the duration of candidature regardless of staff leave and other absences from the College” (Code of Conduct in Supervision of Higher Degrees by Research), approves the appointment of supervisors, having regard for “their qualifications, experience, their research interests and their personal qualities” (*ibid.*). It is guided in these responsibilities by clearly articulated Higher Degrees by Research Rules and Procedures (2000). Indeed, the National Protocols imply that quality supervision involves staff who are engaged in research, requiring: “a culture of sustained scholarship extending from that which informs inquiry and basic teaching and learning, to the creation of new knowledge through research, and original creative endeavour” (Protocol 1).

However, DEST only recognises 12 staff at AMC as being research-active. Moreover, AUQA is aware of growing national trends towards universities requiring experience as co-supervisors, participation in supervisor training and evidence of current research activity of their staff prior to them being appointed as principal supervisors. These are quality assurance provisions that do not appear to be in place at AMC.

Having reviewed the guiding rules, procedures and codes, and having interviewed research management, staff and students, the Audit Panel is not confident that AMC is robustly employing supervisor criteria that are being suitably benchmarked against those of Australian Universities or against international standards.

#### **Recommendation 18.**

**That AMC benchmark criteria and guidelines used by a number of Australian universities in relation to supervisor selection and professional development.**

It is essential that these comments are interpreted in terms of AMC’s overall system for assuring the quality of the supervisory experience, rather than as a statement about the quality of those staff currently engaged in supervisory capacities.

## 4 COMMERCIALISATION

### 4.1 *AMC Search Ltd*

The scope of an audit by AUQA covers all activities carried out in the institution's name. This includes the activities of controlled subsidiary entities.

The relevant goal in The AMC Corporate Plan 2002-2006 is: "To significantly increase the contribution to AMC's operating budget from sources other than government operating grants and to manage this income effectively." The main vehicle for the pursuit of this goal is AMC Search Ltd. This is a wholly-owned subsidiary company set up in 1985 specifically to enable AMC to exploit revenue-raising through the pursuit of consultancy opportunities. Its mission is to "apply the resources of the AMC in a commercial manner, to engage in commercial maritime activities that are conducive to the aims of the AMC, and to further the advancement and application of international maritime knowledge."

The structural arrangements are designed to ensure that AMC is able to exert sufficient governance control over its subsidiary as necessary. Over half of the company's Board must be Members of the AMC Council, including the Chairperson. At a management level, the CEO is now a member of AMC's SMT.

In practice, much of its activity takes the form of tailoring and providing VET training courses for commercial clients. It has been very successful in commercially exploiting AMC's resources. Through this structure, AMC has secured some major defence-related projects such as the provision of training for the Pacific Patrol Boats Project, and a number of off-shore ventures show promise for the future. Where academic quality assurance requirements are raised, such as in the provision of training packages drawn from accredited programs (for example, in the Pacific Patrol Boats Project), the courses are put through AMC's Academic Board process. AMC Search Ltd advised the Audit Panel that it does not provide any HE programs (although it may draw from AMC's HE programs when tailoring short courses for commercial clients). Nor (seemingly contrarily to p66, Performance Portfolio) does it undertake any research, although it does undertake some research-related consulting activity.

#### **Commendation 7.**

**AUQA commends AMC for the establishment of a structure that enables it to exercise effective control over its subsidiary company AMC Search Ltd, as appropriate, and for the company's success to date in generating external revenue.**

Three key resources are made available by AMC to AMC Search Ltd for commercialisation purposes: namely staff, curricula and facilities. The first of these is the focus of some contention. During the visit the Audit Panel spoke with staff directly responsible for AMC Search operations, and AMC academic staff contracted to conduct consultancies for AMC Search. It became evident that the manner in which contract opportunities are made available to AMC staff – based on a case by case assessment of "best fit" – is not sufficiently transparent, even though permission from the staff member's supervisor is required (where there is no apparent "best fit", a request is made to the Faculty Director to identify a suitably qualified staff member who is willing to do the work). These can be personally lucrative contracts, as they can bring in personal revenue over and above AMC salary (if the work is outside their workload; otherwise it is paid to their Faculty). Other staff may feel aggrieved that they are not given opportunities by AMC Search to competitively bid for such contracts. Moreover, the awarding of contract work to one

staff member can also create the need for their colleagues to assume heavier workloads (without recompense) to compensate for them being engaged by AMC Search Ltd.

The Audit Panel concluded that the presence of, effectively, two employer parties is causing some tensions in the workplace.

Given the importance of AMC Search Ltd's revenue-raising activities for the future success of the College, in what is an increasingly competitive commercial environment, the Audit Panel felt that the development of a more transparent allocation process would certainly encourage more AMC staff wanting to make a contribution to become actively engaged in AMC Search operations. It would also go some way to appeasing growing tensions and reluctance on the part of some staff to support colleagues engaged with AMC Search Ltd.

#### **Recommendation 19.**

**That, with respect to staff working for both AMC and AMC Search Ltd, management establish a more transparent process for addressing potential conflicts of interests for staff and for allocating revenue-raising opportunities to suitable staff in an equitable fashion.**

There is considerable potential for the research and teaching activities at AMC to result in commercialisable intellectual property. Indeed, AMC Search has been developed based largely upon this principle. The Audit Panel became aware that the major potential for commercialising IP is with regard to curricula. This becomes particularly noticeable where AMC Search Ltd seeks to commercialise a course in which AMC, AMC Search Ltd and the academic staff concerned may lay claim to ownership of the IP. It was evident to the Audit Panel that there is no consistently understood, accepted and practiced policy in this regard. Although the experiences to date in commercialising research outputs have been few, the same issue exists in principle.

#### **Recommendation 20.**

**That AMC review its policies in respect of Intellectual Property and commercialisation.**

The Audit Panel had the opportunity to inspect AMC Search Ltd's documentation for the ISO 9001:2000 Quality System developed for its operations. The system adopts a process-based model that appears to be highly appropriate for the project-based consultancy work undertaken by AMC Search Ltd. It incorporates client satisfaction surveys with targets that, if not met, result in corrective action. The challenge is now for AMC Search Ltd to have the courage to increment their targets from the current 75%, which it typically comfortably achieves, to more challenging levels in accordance with its commitment to further quality improvement.

Notwithstanding comments earlier in this report about the use of the ISO9000 series of standards at AMC itself, the Audit Panel was satisfied that the model is appropriate and effectively implemented at AMC Search Ltd.

#### **Commendation 8.**

**AUQA commends AMC Search Ltd for a well-developed quality system, including ISO certification, which is relevant to the nature of its business.**

## **4.2 International Commercial Activities**

AMC has been successful in seeking and capitalising upon international business opportunities. The Audit Panel was provided with several examples of contracts with international commercial clients that indicate both a high level of entrepreneurship and a demonstrated ability to deliver to international standards.

**Commendation 9.****AUQA commends AMC for its successes in providing educational services to international markets and thereby diversifying the College's revenue streams.**

The future international commercial possibilities that AMC has identified appear to be well aligned with its mission. The Audit Panel notes that it will be necessary to ensure that the highest values and quality standards are not lost in the (necessary) quest for external sources of revenue. For example, AMC is in the process of establishing a new commercial operation in Kuwait, in which it has operated since 1993, with TAFE Tasmania and a Kuwaiti business partner of long standing. *Prima facie*, this is a positive initiative and AMC is to be commended for its vision. Interestingly, the operation will be called the "Australian College of Kuwait". An important part of a quality system is ensuring that an institution can deliver what it holds itself out as being able to deliver. The Audit Panel cautions that, whilst the Australian College of Kuwait is not a protected term, it implies a scope of activity that is considerably wider than what AMC and its partners are able to provide, and certainly wider than maritime programs.

## 5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On several occasions during the visit, the Audit Panel was informed by members of staff that the College was not set up to serve the needs of the local community of Northern Tasmania, so much as to pursue its mission to serve the needs of the maritime industry, both nationally and globally. After a period of recruitment troubles in the mid to late 1990s, it is now obvious from the College's recent successful recruitment of students from both the mainland and from overseas, and from its commercial undertakings on the mainland and offshore, why this perception may be held. Even so, the Audit Panel was impressed by the level of interaction that AMC has achieved with the local Tasmanian community, and the generally favourable way in which local stakeholders and community representatives described the College as being a very good thing for the region in which it is located. This is especially so in the VET area, where it was frequently stated that the College is the State's "provider of choice" for the fishing industry in relation to seafaring, fishing, and the related conservation and food-preparation studies.

### **Commendation 10.**

**AUQA commends AMC for the good relationships it has established with its external stakeholders, and especially for strong industry links in the VET area.**

This is not to imply that there are not things that the College can still do to improve the way that it relates to its external stakeholders. In fact, despite the generally favourable response by stakeholders, one of their main criticisms was that the College does not sufficiently and pro-actively promote itself, especially to the local community. AMC could improve its efforts to ensure that it promotes its valuable contribution to the State economy, the local community, and to industry, by adopting more pro-active communication strategies with its external stakeholders. The Audit Panel noted the new publication 'AMC in Focus' as being one management response to improve communications, and urges the further development of a more targeted approach that will enable it to anticipate, and more effectively respond to increased segmentation of the College's marketplace.

An important issue concerning AMC's relationship with the communities and stakeholders it serves is whether those communities and stakeholders endorse AMC's aspiration to become a university. The Audit Panel met with a range of people from these constituencies. All were aware of the College's intentions, but attitudes towards the aspiration were very mixed. Some were concerned that the AMC might abandon provision of its traditional services to industry; others thought it might be good for the local economy. This mix of views was also reflected in information obtained from and about AMC's staff and students. Some HE students were very enthusiastic because it would enhance the status of their degrees; VET students were less concerned. If the College is to pursue this aspiration, and indeed if it becomes a university, it will need to work more closely with its various stakeholder groups to attain appropriate support.

## 6 STUDENTS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

### 6.1 *Student Profile*

AMC has a relatively narrow programs profile, through concentration on being a 'specialist provider for the maritime industry'. Nonetheless, it has quite a diverse student profile, through being both a provider of VET programs and higher education undergraduate and postgraduate programs, as well as being a provider of industry-tailored sea-faring and maritime industry training courses. In addition, there is also the provision of research-based and commercial consultancy-based activities. In particular, AMC's success in recruiting international, domestic and interstate students helps to give the College's student body a reasonably multicultural character. AMC has a number of support systems in place, along with a generally high level of awareness by staff, to provide pastoral support for such a multi-ethnic mix of students.

One consequence of the multi-ethnic mix is that some students expressed frustration that their classmates slow down the pace of learning because of difficulties with English. This perspective was endorsed by some academic staff. AMC's English language proficiency entrance requirements seem sound. However, as there still appears to be an issue to resolve within the classrooms, and the Audit Panel passes this observation on to AMC for consideration.

The Audit Panel appreciated the opportunity to interact with a cross-section of AMC students and was generally impressed with both their calibre as individuals, and with their apparent ability to get along with each other.

#### **Commendation 11.**

**AUQA commends AMC for its success in recruiting generally well-motivated and appreciative domestic and international students, and for their efforts to provide campus environments that are supportive of a diverse range of cultures.**

### 6.2 *Academic Liaison Committees*

The Audit Panel spent most of Day 2 of the audit visit at the Beauty Point campus and spoke with staff responsible for operation of the major facilities there, and to students. One of the frequent observations made by both staff and students was the relative isolation felt by students at this location, compared with those at Newnham. The Audit Panel was advised that the response from the College has been to establish a series of program-based Academic Liaison Committees (ALCs) at Beauty Point, and noted that the operation of these was spoken of favorably by the students interviewed.

#### **Commendation 12.**

**AUQA commends AMC for the establishment of Academic Liaison Committees in the programs at Beauty Point.**

The Audit Panel believes that the Beauty Point ALC initiative is a positive example of AMC developing a more student-centered approach into its curriculum, and believes there would be value in extending the deployment of ALCs to programs based at the Newnham campus.

## 7 STAFF AND STAFF SUPPORT SERVICES

The Human Resources (HR) area has recently come under new management, and AMC is formulating a new philosophy and a corresponding new approach to its HR responsibilities. To date, the approach has been based on traditional personnel servicing requirements and has lacked a strategic vision for what systems are required for developing and fostering a vibrant HE/VET culture. As outlined below, the systems in place for HR planning, recruitment, appointment and induction, performance management, professional development and equity are mostly ineffective and require major attention. A document was presented that specifically identified many of the issues covered in this Section and stated that they were “under consideration.” The Audit Panel was very encouraged that AMC management is aware of these needs and appears to be responding appropriately.

The HR area has recently been divided into two separate groups – Human Resources, which will adopt a strategic approach to HR development, and Employee Services, which will manage the various administrative personnel services. It is too soon to determine the effectiveness of this arrangement, but it does structurally create a specialist team focused on strategic development, which is necessary for AMC at this point in its development.

### 7.1 *HR Planning and Management*

There is a current HR Plan derived from the Corporate Plan. However, this has essentially been disregarded and preparations are underway for a new plan that will adopt a more strategic approach. In the Audit Panel’s view, this matter is urgent. The current systems are not effective, yet staff support for the College’s new strategic direction will be essential. AMC proposes to undertake a staff climate survey and focus groups, with a view to identifying a new direction for HR. This is a useful start, and will need to be augmented with, *inter alia*, more effective systems for involving staff in HR policy development, communicating HR policies throughout the organisation, supporting their implementation and monitoring and reviewing their effectiveness. For example, in some instances such as workload management, systemic policies do not yet exist; in others, such as OH&S, the policies are sound but awareness of them is variable.

#### **Recommendation 21.**

**That AMC proceed immediately with the development of a new strategic plan for human resource management, which is based upon the goals and values of the College and which would seek to rapidly bring about the major overhaul of the human resource systems necessary to address the current weaknesses AMC itself has identified.**

### 7.2 *Staffing Profile and Recruitment*

The major emphasis on recruitment policy is regarding increasing the proportion of staff with higher qualifications, such as PhDs. This strategy aligns with AMC’s aspiration to attain university status. Academic staff advised the Panel that it is easier to obtain employment at AMC without a PhD compared with universities. About a quarter of academic staff at AMC have a PhD. However, this may be more reflective of the practical nature of many of the courses offered by the College. In any event, it has the benefit of providing excellent opportunities for many new staff and staff without a PhD. Moreover, the proportion of academic staff with a PhD is rising in accordance with AMC’s intention (25% in 2002 in the Faculty of Maritime Transport & Engineering, up from 18.5% in 1997; and 30% in 2002 for the Faculty of Fisheries & Marine Environment, up from 7.5% in 1997), providing cause for optimism that the profile is becoming more aligned with the College’s aspirations.

AMC acknowledges that its current recruitment practices themselves, however, are not operating in accordance with policy. For example, a number of staff serve on selection committees without having undertaken the mandatory training, and feedback suggests that some selection committees consequently struggle to perform their duties effectively.

Given its niche area, and the relatively small number of providers of maritime higher education and training worldwide, AMC recruits internationally for most academic positions. This brings expertise from a wide range of places to AMC, and has resulted in a multi-ethnic staff profile that helps prepare students for work in a global sense.

More generally, the demographic mix of staff provides an interesting portrait of both the institution and its affiliated industries. There are no indigenous staff. Only 4% of academic staff are women; and 49% of general staff are women. The Corporate Plan has no particular objectives for responding to these proportions which, whilst *prima facie* remarkable, may well reflect the industry proportions. AMC claims that many of these demographic statistics are “beyond the capacity of AMC to change in the immediate future” (Performance Portfolio, p118), such as “the number of females in senior management positions.” AMC’s good record of compliance with the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 has earned it a one year waiver from annual reporting on EEO. Nonetheless, the Audit Panel noted that there are few women in senior positions, and none in the SMT. The Corporate Plan holds as an objective “to engender a positive culture which values diversity...” (Objective 5.1). The Audit Panel encourages AMC to continue to make an effort in addressing the clear under-representation of women and indigenous people at various levels of staff, albeit accepting that the targets may need to be humble in the foreseeable future. It takes some comfort from the high level of commitment implied by the Principal chairing the AMC Equity Committee.

It would be unbalanced for this Report to imply that the staff, by virtue of the above statements about recruitment processes and demographic statistics, are therefore not serving the College well. Indeed, the Audit Panel was very impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of virtually all of the people it met. Although an underlying sense of disquiet about the management of the College was also detected, almost all staff interviewed agreed that a serious effort is being made by all parties to improve both the organisational climate and the College’s HR processes.

### 7.3 *Appointment and Induction*

An area requiring considerable improvement is that of appointment, including orientation, induction and probation. Responsibility for ensuring effective induction takes place is delegated to departmental heads. There are no robust methods for checking that this is working well, and many staff interviewed by the Audit Panel have not received any induction at all, although others have and report satisfactory experiences. The Audit Panel found a similar situation pertaining to probation, where most staff interviewed (for whom this was relevant issue) indicated a lack of awareness of any probationary requirements. The College indicates that the probationary requirements are stated in the “Instrument of Offer”, but these requirements do not appear to always translate into practice.

AMC is aware of many of these issues. Central management has attempted to devolve responsibility for these areas to local managers, in order to share leadership roles. This is admirable, but will need to be accompanied with a devolved accountability system that ensures the delegated responsibilities are carried out effectively.

#### **Recommendation 22.**

**That AMC develop a more systematic and consistent approach to designing, delivering and monitoring the induction and probation processes for new staff.**

#### 7.4 *Performance and Workload Management*

The College has a performance management system, but in practice many supervisors and staff are not sufficiently trained, and in many instances the policy is not being applied. Workload planning is the responsibility of program/departmental heads, and inconsistencies in workload allocations between departments are evident. There is no planned approach to either career or succession planning for staff, and there is widespread dissatisfaction with the (unfunded) promotions system, with few staff confident that superior performance is appropriately recognised and rewarded.

AMC has a goal of achieving zero grievances. To date, it acknowledges that this tough goal has not been achieved. Awareness of the College's grievance procedures is variable, and a number of those who are aware of it believe it to be unnecessarily complex.

Again, AMC has accurately identified most of these issues and has proposed increased training and increased use of rewards. The Audit Panel, while wishing to support the AMC's honesty and list of self-identified recommendations, found little evidence of actual progress in this area.

##### **Recommendation 23.**

**That AMC review its current approaches to performance management, workload planning, promotions, career and succession planning.**

#### 7.5 *Staff Development*

In its Portfolio (section 2.5), and during interviews with senior staff, AMC acknowledges that there is no strategic approach to identifying the developmental needs of the staff and tailoring a response. There are a number of *ad hoc* staff development opportunities in place. Some staff spoke favourably of these opportunities, although their systemic effectiveness is questionable.

The most notable example relates to teaching development. Many of the new staff at AMC have no previous teaching experience. AMC, through its Enterprise Agreement, provides for all teaching staff to undertake a 4-day tertiary teaching course, followed by a required refresher course every three years (run by the University of Tasmania). This requirement has been in place for six years. AMC's clear commitment to ensuring that all teaching staff receive suitable professional development opportunities in this area is highly commendable. However, attendance figures provided to the Audit Panel indicate that this policy has not been rigorously followed. Some staff have taken advantage of the opportunity, but the majority have not. The Audit Panel heard a diverse range of opinions about the value of the course, with valid points on both sides. For example, a number of staff new to teaching found it very helpful; whereas more experienced teachers gained little value from the four days. What is clear is that the strategy is not optimal as currently constructed.

##### **Recommendation 24.**

**That AMC review its teacher training policy, with a view to establishing a system that is more aligned with the actual professional development and training needs of its teachers.**

Funds are available at both Departmental and College levels in support of various staff development initiatives. At present, however, these are not strategically managed and many staff are not aware of them. Communication of HR policies, processes and staff development opportunities needs to be improved to include strategies which complement the posting of information on the web site.

## 8 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### 8.1 *Library*

Although a small organisation, AMC is spread across two major sites, making provision of a critical mass of Library resources to all students a challenge. Some students and staff advised the Audit Panel that the information resources were inadequate, especially at Beauty Point, and that resources for document delivery should be enhanced. However, the student Corporate Survey results for 2002 were more positive.

The Audit Panel was advised that the Library's strategic intentions are recorded in the AMC Corporate Plan, but this is not supported by a review of that document. Indeed, it is not entirely clear how the Library is responding its strategic challenges. Some key staff met by the Audit Panel are not aware of the Library's strategic intentions or approaches regarding service improvement. This is likely to limit the effectiveness of the Library's efforts in implementing its plans. The Library's self-review report (May, 2002) provides a range of goals and improvement strategies, which indicate awareness of the changing environment, but does not include information about its actual results. Although some client feedback is received via the Corporate Services survey, the Library may wish to consider a more focused, robust client disband the Library Users Committee as a consequence of the Librarian having greater access to the more general fora of Academic Board and Faculty committees.

Lack of clarity over the Library's strategic direction is not to suggest that the Library is idle. As mentioned, the Library has recently launched its e-Library services. This is intended to provide a greater level of support to DE students and indicates ongoing commitment to service improvement in this area. AMC's establishment of an Information Management Committee, which had not yet met at the time of the audit visit, may assist in developing College-wide strategies in this important area.

One policy area that falls within the Library management's jurisdiction is copyright management. Awareness of copyright issues amongst AMC staff, particularly with respect to using electronic resources such as WebCT and the e-Library, was very low. This is a difficult area, particularly as the use of new technologies grows at an exponential rate. However, the likelihood and consequences of non-compliance are high, particularly for an institution aspiring to university status.

#### **Recommendation 25.**

**That AMC ensure that all staff are well versed in clear policies and practices with respect to copyright, particularly covering the different modes of education delivery used by AMC.**

### 8.2 *ICTS*

For a small organisation, AMC has a high requirement for information technology and related support, both for its academic activities and its administrative activities. Accordingly, the Audit Panel reviewed the relevant documentation, met ICTS staff and also discussed information and communication technology issues with a broad range of staff and students.

The Audit Panel was advised that the computers available for student use are, in most cases, over five years old, and there is no imminent plan to upgrade them. Indeed, the Audit Panel saw no evidence of a robust equipment replacement schedule being followed. This is not surprising given the College's financial deficit, but nonetheless is of some concern,

Regarding support of those ICTS services that are in place, there is currently no helpdesk facility for users who require urgent assistance. At present, calls for help are responded to only if staff happen to be in the office when the calls come – otherwise they go to an answering machine. There is no after-hours support. To an extent, AMC is constrained by its scale. However, there are numerous means by which it could have support on call. AMC is increasingly reliant on technology, and as its equipment ages, calls for help may increase.

Related to this is the provision of professional development for ICTS staff. In what is perhaps the fastest-changing and fastest-growing industry, the need for ICTS staff to have opportunity to keep abreast of the latest developments, perhaps in a just-in-time (JIT) fashion, is very important. The Audit Panel was exposed to contrasting views as to the manner in which this was being addressed. Corporate information states that a number of ICTS staff have been supported through bachelor programs in computing/information systems; other advice states that financial provision for just-in-time professional development has been redirected to hardware upgrades for the past several years. AMC may wish to review the most effective means for ensuring that its in-house information and communication technology expertise is maintained at the most appropriate level.

**Recommendation 26.**

**That AMC pay further attention to the planning and implementation of processes for the systematic upgrading of its ICTS capability, and associated communication technologies, by the adoption of a rolling program of planned system upgrade, and the establishment of a help desk facility to provide support for system users.**

**8.3 Student Administration**

As a small institution, AMC does not have the economies of scale to afford the student administration systems commonly found in large universities. AMC operates its own Student Administration and Information Logging System (SAILS), which was developed in-house. Already, SAILS caters for both VET and HE and is being expanded to serve residential and equity purposes. However, attempts to expand use of this and closely related technology-based support systems have been mixed, as evinced by the failed attempt to provide online examination results processing. The College has now introduced a Student Administration Continuous Improvement Project (SACIP), enacted via weekly dual-campus meetings and designed to improve not only SAILS and related work processes, but also the institution's capacity and capability for organisational learning. It is too early to determine the effectiveness of this approach, but the Audit Panel nonetheless deemed it a positive development.

**Commendation 13.**

**AUQA commends AMC for embarking upon the Student Administration Continuous Improvement Project, with a view to improving not only its student administration but also its organisational learning capabilities.**



## APPENDIX A: THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME COLLEGE

The Australian Maritime College (AMC) was established in 1978 to provide a single national education, training and research facility for the maritime industry. AMC is currently one of only two higher education institutions in Australia, whose governance is the responsibility of the Federal Government (the other institution being the Australian National University).

The Maritime Industry AMC serves covers, in the broadest sense, the following areas:

- trading and recreational seagoing activity
- port and terminal management
- naval architecture
- sustainable management of marine resources and the ocean environment (including the associated social context)
- commercial and recreational fishing
- engineering of vessel design, offshore structures and maritime equipment
- management of maritime operations and regulatory oversight

AMC is a dual-sector institution authorised to self-accredit its higher education offerings. The academic programs at AMC range from certificate level programs to research masters and doctoral degrees. In 2002, AMC enrolled 2351 students (899 EFTSU), of which 659 (383 EFTSU) were HE. A majority of AMC's students study part time; about half taking advantage of the College's distance education opportunities. In 2001, students from approximately 50 countries were enrolled in AMC courses. In 2002, AMC had 185 FTE staff, 76 of whom were academic.

AMC has a unique-to-Australia suite of maritime education, training and research facilities:

- 60 metre Towing Tank
- Integrated Marine Simulator and Machinery Space Simulator
- Cavitation Tunnel
- Flume Tank (re-circulating water channel, with horizontal planar motion mechanism)
- Purpose-built Survival Centre
- Model Test Basin
- Fire Fighting Centre
- 64 metre training ship, *Wyuna*
- 34 metre fishing training and research vessel, *Bluefin*.

AMC operates two campuses: the Newnham campus being located in a suburb of Launceston, the main city in the northern part of Tasmania, and the Beauty Point campus located in a fishing port on the lower Tamar River.

AMC also provides courses through agreements with the University of Southern Queensland (at Hervey Bay), the Northern Territory University, Seafood Training Tasmania. It also provides courses by distance education and through agreements with partners located offshore, such as in Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Kuwait.

In 2002, AMC applied to the Commonwealth Government to be granted university status and a Panel was set up by DEST to review its operations for that purpose. The findings of the DEST review are expected to be announced in 2003.

**APPENDIX B: THE OBJECTS OF AUQA**

1. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of QA arrangements relating to the activities of Australian universities, other self-accrediting institutions (SAIs) and state and territory HE accreditation bodies.
2. Monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on QA arrangements in SAIs, and on processes and procedures of state and territory accreditation authorities, and on the impact of those processes on quality of programs.
3. Report on the criteria for the accreditation of new universities and non-university HE courses as a result of information obtained during the audit of institutions and state and territory accreditation processes.
4. Report on the relative standards of the Australian HE system and its QA processes, including their international standing, as a result of information obtained during the audit process.

## **APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL**

Mr Martin Carroll, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne

Professor Susan Holland (Panel Chair), Pro Vice-Chancellor, Edith Cowan University, Perth

Ms Felicity McGregor, Librarian, University of Wollongong, Wollongong

Mr Colin Thornton, Director, Hercules Offshore Lifting Gear Ltd., Darwin

Dr Willi Toisuta, Secretary, Universities Accreditation Council of Indonesia, Jakarta