

PREFACE

The sea is at once a barrier and a highway, a menace and a solace. We may look upon it as a bottomless sink or a bountiful store, a dying waste or a vibrant source of life.

The shore has for many been the end of their aspirations, the limit of resources, the sea - that hostile element out there. But the shore is one of the great interfaces, an interface across which land and sea interact; an interface across which water and nutrients reach the sea and across which food and other commodities reach the cities along the shore. It is a dynamic interface.

Beyond the shore the sea is seen as a mystery and a challenge. Man is probing as never before, but the mystery remains, deeper and more complex. Man probes the sea now not only with fishing lines as in former times but also with complex measuring devices within the ocean, with scientific submarines, that allow close observation of the sea floor, with drills that sample the rocks below the sea floor and even with satellites that reveal the gross structure and properties of the ocean surface. All these reveal that the sea is a vast and complicated system of interrelated and interacting sub-systems, some physical, some chemical, some biological. What can we take from the sea yet not disturb the equilibrium to our ultimate disadvantage? Can we farm the sea in the widest sense of the phrase? What are the resources of the sea?

It is appropriate that a society such as ours, devoted to disseminating and integrating the various branches of knowledge and situated as we are on a small hummock of land surrounded by the sea, should concern itself with the resources of the sea. We have an intense historical interest in the sea and at least some of its resources. We have seen sealing and whaling industries come and go, the scallop fisheries rise and fall. We manage the mutton bird, lobster and abalone and we farm

oysters. Can we farm scallops, mussels, scale fish? In years to come, will we see drilling rigs off-shore? Will our land be fertilised by phosphate from the ocean floor to the west? How will we process our fish? This volume explores some of these questions in a Tasmanian context. May it engender more understanding of our marine environment and encourage more questions about the resources of our seas.

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