

Former Penshurst man honoured

A FORMER Penshurst man has been inducted into the Australian Maritime Hall of Fame at a gala awards night in Sydney.

Dr Terry O'Brien was described at the awards night, attended by 500 people, as "an Australian who has had a global impact" with the creation of his world-leading navigation technology which allows ships to carry greater loads safely.

"Through the exercise of his own intellect, he has created a system that has already, and will in the future, save the resources, ports and shipping industries literally billions of dollars," his citation said.

His Hall of Fame awards follows his 2010 OAM award in the Queen's birthday honours for services to the maritime industry. He is the world expert in accurately calculating (to the cm) how close to the seabed a ship can sail without touching the bottom.

On Sunday, Dr O'Brien, 80, returned to Penshurst to celebrate the 140th anniversary of St Joseph's Primary School where his illustrious career began.

Raised on a small farm near Penshurst, Dr O'Brien attended St Joseph's before undertaking secondary schooling at St Patrick's College, Ballarat.

After working as a Wimmera Shire engineer based at Horsham for seven years, he was an academic at Melbourne University for 22 years before branching out to further develop his model into a working Dynamic Under Keel Clearance (DUKC) system for commercial shipping.

His invention has, in various forms, been adopted by many ports around the world. His technology allows vessels to sail with a deeper draught which allows more cargo to be carried on fewer voyages. Every centimetre deeper that a bulk iron ore carrier can sail means it can carry an extra 150 tonnes of cargo.

His DUKC technology is now 21 years old, and as well as saving the maritime industry billions of dollars, it has also reduced the need to regularly dredge ports. Dr O'Brien has also invented a wide variety of other systems such as a warning system that increases the operating safety of ships at berth.

Dr O'Brien and wife Pauline, who has a Masters degree in Educational Psychology, are parents to six extremely talented children - three medical specialists, a barrister/politician and an engineer, while their only daughter is a neuropsychologist.



DR O'Brien is pictured in Penshurst on Sunday with his son, David O'Brien, an MP for Western Victoria Region, celebrating St Joseph's Primary School's 140th anniversary. Photo: ROBYN AGNEW. 141123ra038