

# ADI recruited South African expert

*The considerable redesign of the ADI Bushmaster vehicle is understood to have been carried under the direction of a South African, Mr Koos de Wet, who was recruited by ADI to ensure that its bid was compliant.*

*Mr De Wet is believed to have run his own business for five years in South Africa and earlier worked for Reumech who are linked with ANI in the rival bid by ASVS of the Taipan.*

*Australian DEFENCE REPORT queried whether it is permissible to alter a design after tenders close (which was in mid 1996). However we have been assured by the Australian Defence Force that this is permitted provided the fundamental specifications and price are not changed.*

*ADR also has been told that ASVS redesigned its gear box in the Taipan after the tenders closed, and there was nothing improper in the company doing that.*

*At the time of going to press the Australian Defence Force was awaiting the go-ahead from the Deputy Secretary - Acquisition, Mr Garry Jones for contract signatures so that the field trials could proceed, and the production contract agreed.*

*Once this happens the two aspirants have 24 weeks to produce three vehicles each for the trials, which were listed to run for 12 months, although we understand the Australian Army would like to shorten the trial period, and thus make up for the considerable time lost so far.*

*Even based on official statements in the middle of last year, the trials were to start on December 15, 1996, so by the time they may get going, the project will be running about 18 months late.*

*This appears to disregard one of the objectives of the Government's Defence Reform Program which is to speed up project decision making and implementation.*

*There is considerable concern that Defence major and minor capital equipment projects seem to be over cautiously process managed rather than outcome management driven. Further there is growing frustration within at least some sections of Defence that at some critical top levels there is a distinct reluctance to delegate authority to keep initiatives, project evaluation, analysis and decision-making moving at a steady pace.*

*To some degree, given the difficulties experienced in major projects like the new COLLINS submarine combat system integration, the Jindalee Operation Radar Network, and now the cancellation of the Army's MULGARA surveillance/reconnaissance project, some caution is understandable. The general feeling, however is that in most cases it is very much overdone.*

*At the same time it appears that Cabinet is so weighed with a number of difficult issues, that consideration of some key Defence projects awaiting a further tick by the Government are delayed by weeks if not months.*

*It is perhaps of more than passing interest that Mr Arch Bevis, the former Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, now the Shadow Defence Minister, said in a recent speech that the time taken to select a successful (Defence) tenderer, is often outrageously long. Mind you, there are those who would counter that in government he did not seem to be able to do much about it either.*