

# JET OUT OF HERE!

**W**hen Wealco first introduced Hamilton Water Jets to the boat market here, there was considerable resistance. “Nobody would accept it as a propulsion system,” recalls Anthony Wong. “We had a lot of persuading to do.”

It was not until he managed to get the para-military interested that he won over the commercial sector. “After knocking on a lot of doors in the commercial sector, I decided to focus on the military. When the para-military people accepted it, the commercial sector sat up and took notice.”

He adds: “With the commercial people, it’s always a case of dollars and cents. They found it expensive and they weren’t that sure of its capabilities. But with the para-military, they had a need to fulfil, so they were prepared to look at alternatives.”

Wong explains that the jet engine works on the same principle as that of a high-pressure water hose pushing things forward. It is unlike a propeller engine which has an ‘appendage drag’ that slows it down. Built by Sir John Hamilton in New Zealand, where rivers are shallow and cannot use propeller engines, jet engines get more efficient

above 25 knots and also allow a boat to stop within very short distances. “If you watch speedboats racing in New Zealand, you’ll see those boats go spinning all over the place. That’s because they’re all fitted with Hamilton Water Jets,” says Wong.

Another advantage is that a boat with this jet engine does not need a rudder. Also, the engine is encased, and therefore, less susceptible to damage if the boat hits something in the water, compared with regular engines fitted with propellers.

“Water jets are more cost efficient because there are fewer breakdowns, often no more than 10 percent of the fleet at any one time. This is especially significant on patrols where spare boats are needed in case of breakdowns. So, by using water jet engines you’ll need fewer boats to do the same job,” says Wong.

The jets have improved over the years and they have since taken off in Singapore. “In recent times, we’ve also been able to get the ferry boat business. The Batam ferry boat from Singapore uses water jet engines. We’ve also delivered jet engines to nine 600-passenger ferries built here for Portugal and three built here for Cochin in India.”