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HD **Aerial mapper navigates a location of interest**

BY TIM BOREHAM, CRITERION
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Nearmap (NEA) 56c THE ambitious aerial mapper-cum-digital publisher has entered the US market with a cunning plan that simply replicates its successful subscription-based model in that more capacious — and capricious — market.

It's a case of so far, so good, with the firm mapping the main east and west coast centres, covering 80 million people, in just 12 weeks.

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Now for the actual sales … A premium version of the free Google Maps, Nearmap produces high-resolution images of buildings or topographies for users such as builders and solar panel installers.

According to CEO Simon Crowther, there are plenty of aerial mappers with a Cessna or two.

Nearmap is different to these small-time Biggles because of the way it parses the data and makes it more relevant for specialist users. In fact, Nearmap owns no planes.

Crowther says Nearmap updates its Sydney coverage up to six times annually and up to 10 times in Perth, where airspace is less congested.

"We were the only company to capture the Brisbane floods,'' he says. "When disaster and pestilence arises, there's good business for us.'' Nearmap last year recorded a maiden profit of $7.1 million — an $8.1m turnaround — on revenue of $18m (up 62 per cent).

Unusually for a subs-based business, churn has been almost non-existent. "We have a run-rate goal in Australia of $30m-$50m (revenue) by December 2015,'' Crowther says. "We also expect something similar in the US by 2017.'' Having rolled out an insurance offering in July, Nearmap is about to release one for the construction industry, the biggest specialty sector. Nearmap surged from 3c in August 2012 to a peak of 64c in January this year.

The easy gains have been snaffled, but we hazard a buy call ahead of first US revenues.

Nearmap's cash balance of $23m means it is unlikely to need to raise capital.

Nuplex (NPX) $2.76 PRIVATE-EQUITY firms aren't known for paying lavish premiums for businesses, so presumably the Sydney-based Champ's slide-rule brigade knew what they were doing with this one.

Champ has bought the trans-Tasman resins and coatings house's Melbourne-based distribution and speciality products arms for $NZ140m ($127m).

A month ago when news leaked out, the deal was vaunted to be worth $NZ77m-$NZ105m.

As one analyst remarked: "good sale, good price".

The unsolicited deal is fillip for Nuplex chief Emery Severin, who has been battling with flagging demand from local manufacturers.

By default, the share of sales from Nuplex's Australian/NZ ops falls from 36 per cent to 23 per cent. Apart from halving Nuplex's gearing ratio to 14.5 per cent, Severin said the board was yet to decide on how the funds would be used.

What's clear though is that Nuplex's growth will be driven from its fledgling **operations** in Vietnam and **China**, where it has increased capacity by 75 per cent.

Severin says Nuplex also aspires to widen its footprint in the US, which is not surprising given that market accounts for 25 per cent of global coatings demand.

Long-term buy.

Tassal (TGR) $3.53 Huon Aquaculture Group (HUO) not yet listed Clean Seas Tuna (CSS) 8.9c AQUACULTURE a-fish-ionados will be spoiled for choice when Tasmanian salmon producer Huon Aquaculture hits the boards today with a nominal $415m market cap.

But why dangle a line in the hope of a fat catch if there's a decent one in the basket already?

Huon last year produced 15,200 tonnes of salmon and forecasts current year output of 16,700 tonnes and revenue of $214m (up 14 per cent).

Tassal, also based in Tassie, last year chalked up a 15 per cent net profit rise to $41m on revenue of $260m, but on a 12 per cent volume reduction to 19,268 tonnes.

On consensus numbers, Tassal (market cap $520m) trades on an earnings multiple of 12 times, while Huon's $132m raising at $4.75 apiece was struck on a multiple of 14 times. We wonder what Huon offers that the "cheaper" Tassal can't.

Meanwhile, the Port Lincoln-based Clean Seas has been spruiking its story, based improving western kingfish production rather than the stalled southern bluefin tuna propagation program.

Clean Seas' change of tuna on the cash-sapping bluefin program enabled the **company** to report a $1.25m underlying profit last year.

Clean Seas aims to produce 1350 tonnes of kingfish this year, up from 571 tonnes last year.

That's encouraging, but we want more proof of a turnaround before we hook this one. Avoid.

Tassal is a buy, if only because Huon's debut is likely to generate collateral interest.The Australian accepts no responsibility for stock recommendations. Readers should contact a licensed financial adviser. The author does not hold shares in any of the companies mentioned.

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