Well, it all started in the run up to Globecom’98 in Sydney, when Professor Kevin Sowerby from the University of Auckland asked me, whether I would be able to partake in a pre-Globecom colloquium in Auckland. Whilst this plan regretfully did not materialise, Kevin kindly extended another opportunity to me during Globecom’2001 in order to facilitate an exchange of ideas between our teams. The planning of the trip gathered further momentum, when a few more IEEE Chapter Chairs from the Australia/New Zealand region approached me with similar requests. More precisely, to both my honour and delight, all the nine Chapters in this region were interested in a potential exchange of ideas during my IEEE DLT of the region.

Against this backdrop my sweet predicament was that of finding the time for this marathon trip ‘down under’! It turned out that even if I travelled vast distances every day, realistically I could only fit the trip in at the cost of cutting short my annual break during the summer and by sacrificing the attendance of Globecom in Taipei. But planning was well under way. Fortunately the University’s Travel Agency skilfully organised the logistics of the trip, such that in Adelaide, Christchurch and Sydney I was able to offer a number of specialist research oriented lectures in addition to the broader overview lectures delivered for a wider audience in all the visited locations.

I presume most professionals, who have more commitments than time and who travel extensively as part of their daily activities have the same ambivalent feelings about travel. It is both necessary and fun, but we pay a price in terms of an impulse-like workload surge both before and after the trip, despite working hard also throughout the trip. Well, in addition to the laptop PC I ended up having to take a batch of urgent work with me, which I completed on the plane to Singapore while the other passengers enjoyed watching those just-released movies that I never get to watch.

Following a productive but rather tiring, nearly 24-hour trip to Perth I was greeted by the local Chapter Chair, David May at the airport. I was very grateful to David, since his kind hospitality cushioned my landing and helped me stay awake until early evening. I had to adjust to eight hours time difference and get ready for a full day’s programme on the following day, which was the first official day of my DLT. I was greeted by Professors Zoubir as well as Chung and Dr Keerthipala at Curtin University of Technology. Our discussions swooped on research, as we involved the team of PhD students ‘engrossed’ in a whole host of cutting-edge signal processing and wireless communications problems. It was a truly enlightening experience. My evening-lecture hosted by Western Power was followed by a range of technically motivated chats and I was very grateful for the top-of-the-range multimedia lecture theatre, allowing me to duly augment the power of multimedia and telepresence. I was also privileged to share ideas and experiences related to collaborative
industrial and academic research with Prof. Sven Nordholm, research director of Australian Telecomm’s inter-university cooperative research centre.

As in Perth, in Adelaide I also had a busy schedule. Whilst my tour was organised by the Communications Society (ComSoc), with the local ComSoc’s consent in Adelaide I was also asked by the Information Theory (IT) society to offer a detailed research lecture on ‘Coding and Transmission Paradigms for Dispersive Wireless Channels’. I am very grateful to Dr Adrian Barbulescu, Dr Alex Grant, Professor Lars Rasmussen, Dr Peter Shoubridge and to their teams for the enlightening exchange of ideas we enjoyed. Thanks to Dr Ahmed Hasem-Sakhtsari, I was also able to briefly visit the Human Systems Integration Group of the Australian Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) before my departure to Melbourne – yet another time-zone.

The overview presentation was well-attended also in Melbourne. Several representatives of TELSTRA, one of the largest wireless service providers in Australia, were present and my hosts were Craig Skinner, the current Chapter Chair and Enn Vinnal, the previous Chair. Academics and PhD students from both La Trobe and from RMIT University also enriched the diversity of the audience and contributed to the concluding discussions. What a memorable evening I shared in Melbourne with Craig and Enn, as we strolled along the waterfront in that mellow spring-time dusk.

My flight to Canberra landed on Saturday afternoon and I was ready to catch up on the past week’s lost sleep. Thanks to Robert Prandolini, I was privileged enough to finally be able to immerse in that wild and wonderful Australian bush, take snapshots of kangaroos, emus, koalas, cockatoos, wallabies and other weird and wonderful southern creatures – a truly delightful day. My overview lecture was attended by an interesting variety of people from right across the local academic and industrial community, from the DSTO, from the Australian National University, etc.

Sydney and the New South Wales Chapter are likely to have the largest wireless communications community in Australia. Hence I was requested by Dr Philip Ogunbona, the local Chapter Chair to provide a research outlook on CDMA systems. The lecture spanned the whole afternoon and it was entitled Advances in CDMA – Future-proof adaptive MC-CDMA, space-time spreading and genetic algorithm aided multiuser detection, coded modulation and ‘all that’.

The lectures in Sydney took place at the University of Technology, known as UTS, kindly hosted by Professor Sam Reisenfeld. Professors Branka Vucetic, David Everitt, Abbas Jamalipour as well as their colleagues represented the University of Sydney. Academic colleagues from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and industrial colleagues from CSIRO, Lucent, Motorola, Telstra, etc have also contributed to the ensuing in-depth discussions. My sincere thanks are due to all my valued colleagues, these informative debates more than compensated for missing the chance of that intoxicating view from Centre Point – for the second time… I nonetheless managed a roundtrip on the monorail for a quick birds-eye-view of Sydney!

Off I went to warmer regions of Australia – Brisbane and Townsville were next on my agenda. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) hosted the DLT presentation, and a mixture of strategic as well as technical issues of wireless communications were debated after the lecture. Our discussions with my hosts, Professors Miles Moody and Sridha Sridharan
touched upon the problems of integrating face recognition techniques designed for the MPEG4 video codec’s object-oriented coding mode with wireless transceivers and on other related forward-looking wireless applications using Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Prof Sridharan might like to follow up our discussions by delegating some of his PhD students to my research team in Southampton, UK for cross-fertilising our ideas also in more tangible terms. It was a pleasurable experience to be able to address a wide variety of interested parties, including local researchers and students of QUT, as well as those from further afield, such as academics and researchers of the Gold Coast University and Queensland University. A further interesting feature of my overview lectures was that numerous business development managers and academic colleagues from Information Management, as well as E-commerce Departments have consistently been represented in the audience. I presume, this is good news for both future businesses and students alike.

Enriched by a host of new experiences, I continued my marathon trip to Townsville, the last Australian Chapter on my agenda. My hosts, Professors Janina Mazierska and Keith Kikkert introduced me to their various teaching and research activities at James Cook University, where most of the research is focussed on satellite communications. It was a delight to meet Ron Goodwyn, a former graduate of the Department in Townsville and a local IEEE committee member taking an active interest in popularising electronic engineering amongst his college students. A further impressive Townsville speciality is that Professor Kikkert prepared an MPEG-compressed video CD of the DLT presentation for distribution to their remotely based members. There was just enough time for a ‘pep-talk’ with the students, while imbibing a drop of local red wine with cheese, and for a wink of sleep, since I had a 04:30 wake-up call to catch my flight to Auckland.

New Zealand was a new country for me! What a lovely consolation for all this travelling – I was greeted by daffodils, rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias – a stunning floral display … and, having come from England located in the Northern Hemisphere, this year for the second time! The joy and exuberance of the wonderful English spring shrivelled down my spine. Following an afternoon of discussions with Professors Michael Neve and Kevin Sowerby as well as with their team, we rounded off the day with spectacular views of Auckland by night from the Sky Tower – the tallest man made construction in the Southern Hemisphere, that is – until its replica was erected in Macau …

Well, the gardens of Christchurch are even more reminiscent of England, than those in Auckland. After my arrival I had just sufficient time for a brief email-session and for putting my suit on – it was lecturing-time again. Professor Lee Garth and Harsha Sirisena resourcefully ‘improvised’ with the aid of their associates by furnishing all the multimedia players necessitated by my presentation. The discussions continued after the lecture well into the late evening. The second requested lecture was on recent advances in ‘Coded Modulation Assisted Multiuser Detection Aided CDMA and on Space-time Spreading’. Refreshments consumed with senior members of the Department in the staff club situated in the wonderful botanic garden rounded off the last leg of this marathon journey.

Enriched by a wealth of new experiences, friends and colleagues, it is time to finally live up to all those promises I made to both my colleagues back home in the office as well as to those further afield, out there in cyber-space.

All that remains for me is to express my heartfelt gratitude to our professional body, the IEEE, for their support of this lecturing tour. My sincere hope is that it will be considered as
one that in a modest way contributed towards membership development, towards keeping the COMSOC community abreast of recent developments and trends in wireless communication, but above all one which forged further links across the community, the fabric of the IEEE. I look forward to being of further service to my professional body, but next time I just might aim for a less comprehensive tour, wherever that may take me in other remote corners of the globe…