WATER QUALITY AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

I would like to have my tuppence worth on water quality and the Great Barrier Reef. I have not addressed specific issued. I do not have the skill, time or resources.

Three things are critical.

1. A lagoon is a large shallow body of water enclosed by land. There is no way the body of water within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park can be called a lagoon unless the user was trying to obtain some emotive benefit.

2. All our knowledge, both scientific and that gained through experience, is subject to interpretation and bias and can sometimes be wrong. This is especially so where we have limited knowledge or experience. Take for instance the banana prawn industry in the Gulf of Carpenteria. For many years it has been expected that a big wet season would favour the industry. This year, one of the driest for many years, produced on the best seasons ever. So much for experts.

3. Those industries that are established in the catchments are not going to fold up and go way. The area of land they use will not change much in future years.

It will be nearly impossible to compare the effect different industries have on water quality by using economic indicators. Will government subsidies and assistance packages be deducted from the gross value of production. They are to diverse.

Do not forget that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is supported by government taxes and charges some of which are contributed by people and industry within the area of the reef and its catchments.
Get rid of people and industry that cause water quality problems and the other wont exist.

We could divide pollution in to two types. That which sinks and that which floats and then divide these into two types that which is toxic and that which is not and divide these into industries that create a lot or little pollution.

	Sediment				Floating			
Type	toxic		non-toxic		toxic		non-toxic	
	little	lot	little	lot	little	lot	little	lot
Industry								

Help could then be provided in areas where it is needed, fairly easily.

I should imagine that any areas we have destroyed with sedimentary pollution will remain dead for a long time. If left where they are and not disturbed they should not create any problems unless we have exceptional weather problems that we can not control. Non-toxic sediment has been running into the reef area for thousands of years. Drought followed by heavy rain always caused run-off with soil in it. The area it covers will not differ much from one century to the next although the quantity of sediment may vary.

Sedimentary pollution caused mainly from non-point sources has always been around and will not cause much trouble. The most likely problem is a point source that does not flow into a river. For example a

coastal development that has run-off directly into the sea and is not controlled.

It could be that some inshore areas require a bit of sediment to exist and some nitrogen and phosphorus could be beneficial to the area. Who really knows. Will the reef evolve around gradual change. The rivers that flow through the Lakefield National Park should provide an idea of how much sediment normally ends up in the sea. There are some industries in the catchments but they are not extensive. What is the inshore reef like there.

The Queensland Government has adopted a policy that require the quality of effluent produced by local governments to be improved. The Cairns City Council will spend $90 million over the next twenty years to ensure this. Every household will contribute $20 a year to achieve this. This is the way to go. Tackle the problem at the source. Organisations like the Cairns River Improvement Trust which was established under the River Improvement Trust 1940 should be responsible for the quality of the water in the river and ultimately the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

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