

# Cape York Marine Advisory Group

**C/- P.O. Box 300, COOKTOWN, Q. 4871**

|                        |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Chair                  | Executive Member   | Executive Member   | Executive Member   | Executive Member   | Executive Member   |
| Ian McCollum           | Gary Cassidy       | Carmel Mitchell    | Danny Lee          | Bruce Potter       | Alan Jones         |
| Ph/Fax: (07) 4069 5300 | Ph: (07) 4069 6431 | Ph: (07) 4069 5095 | Ph: (07) 4069 5900 | Ph: (07) 4069 5090 | Ph: (07) 4069 6318 |

*Community involvement in planning and managing Queensland's Marine Parks*

Productivity Commission  
Great Barrier Reef Study

## Introduction:

CYMAG area of interest extends from the Bloomfield River in the South to the tip of Cape York. This group has been very aware of water quality issues since formation some 10 years ago and has sought to be well informed and active in this regard.

In the Far Northern Zone (FNZ) coral reefs are much closer inshore than in southern areas and therefore more subject to land based influences.

Information on specific land and sea based influences in this relation is sparse to non existent. Groups such as CYMAG accumulate a large base of anecdotal evidence from members and from reef users in this region.

CYMAG now has the equipment and has commenced best practice monitoring of basic water quality parameters in two local rivers, being fortunate in having membership well qualified in the required procedures.

Taking into account the short time frame provided, the heavy workload already being undertaken by our membership on several other draft planning and management issues that take a heavy toll of our time, we intend to comment on issues of particular relevance that we consider within the competence of this committee.

## FAR NORTHERN ZONE (Bloomfield north)

1. Both land based and sea based monitoring are minimal to non existent. It is essential that at least basic levels of information be established.
2. This region is basically promoted by resource managers as a "wilderness" area. Low levels of resources devoted to management have led to a high degree of virtually uncontrolled activities in tourism and recreational activities leading directly to the problems of under-made and under-maintained roads, tracks and off road bush bashing which directly cause erosion and sedimentation problems as well as the problems with rubbish and human faeces. Feral pigs and their interaction with estuarine and coastal acid sulphate soils are only now being recognised as a problem of potentially major significance in the degradation of coastal wetlands and the wet season run off of highly acidified water. (High cost to graziers and park management)
3. Population pressures leading to urban and man created run off, will without doubt degrade many areas of the G.B.R. Relatively unaffected areas such as the FNZ need special attention to ensure that at least some of the inshore reef areas of the GBR are maintained in as pristine a state as possible.
4. It is highly desirable that the FNZ and associated catchments achieve a level of information where sound decision making is possible. The high percentage of National Parks, reserves and Aboriginal

lands giving a low economic base to the region reduces the potential to obtain commerce or industry based funding for environmental initiatives.

- 5/6. Existent economic indicators would not show an accurate picture of Far Northern tourism. Cape York tourism has a large base in the use of four-wheel drive vehicles in remote locations. An expensive and difficult on site survey over a dry season time frame would be needed to develop some degree of accuracy in baseline information.
7. Lacking other infrastructure indigenous aboriginal and Caucasian communities place a high degree of importance on coastal and reef based activities on eastern Cape York . CYMAG has in the past conducted surveys on the use of and the environmental and cultural values placed on these areas by a local community. Area specific surveys of this type could produce a usage/value database for Cape York.
8. Local surveys (see 7) and seasonal polling of visiting recreational four wheel drivers/fishers would provide a some way accurate database.
9. Queensland Fisheries Service- Commercial Fishing/Trawling/Harvesting  
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority- Commercial Charter Operations
10. From the Bloomfield river north, land use patterns and population densities differ totally from the Port Douglas-Cairns-Tully section of the FNZ. A high level of protected areas on land and on the GBR cause the usage and management dynamics to vary considerably from those in the high population high land use areas. The FNZ of "Wilderness" takes in over 25% of the length of the GBR. A far more accurate picture would emerge by treating this area as a separate entity.
- 11/14. No comment.
15. FNZ. BLOOMFIELD NORTH. WATER QUALITY ISSUES.
  - a. **Commercial Shipping-** Groundings, discharges (oils, fuels, garbage, effluents, cargo overboard) shallow area bottom sediment disturbance.
  - b. **Commercial Fishing-** Discharges, sediment disturbance.
  - c. **Charter Operations-** discharges, high level sunscreen use.
  - d. **Local Government-** High erosion rate and sediment runoff from under-made, under-maintained roads. Uncontrolled urban runoff, sewerage plant effluents, dump leachates, inadequate erosion controls on building excavation, subdivision works, road and drainage works.
  - e. **Grazing-** Riverbank and wetlands erosion, burning off practices, feral pig caused degradation.
  - f. **National Parks & Reserves-** Gross management under-funding, high incidence feral plants and animals, uncontrolled human usage causing erosion, littering (rubbish and excrement), vegetation destruction.
  - g. **Aboriginal Communities-** Under-funded infrastructure leading to road erosion, inadequate sewerage and rubbish disposal.
  - h. **Quarrying/Mining/Timber Milling-** Various degrees of runoff and sedimentation.
16. Some studies on property management plans, burn off procedures and feral plants and animals. Time is running out for completion of these studies and the practical application of good management practices on ALL Cape York lands.
- 17/18. Community organisations such as CYMAG and local catchment management groups do their best to promote environmental awareness and to encourage better practice in community activities and land use issues.

Cape York has little media infrastructure, personal contact being the principle means of obtaining or disseminating information. This makes the process time consuming and expensive.

Policing of rules and regulations in remote, low population regions is prohibitively expensive. A whole community approach gives the best chance of ongoing success in environmental responsibility.

19. Far northern rivers have different catchment/usage dynamics. Rivers from the Bloomfield north would be better treated as a separate grouping.
20. No valid information in the region.

21. There needs to be one single clear chain of arrangement and thence management of water quality issues in the GBR. The hard issues of urban runoff and sewerage effluent disposal must be given as equal attention as the more soft target issues such as agriculture.

On behalf of CYMAG

Ian McCollum  
Chair