

OPENING ADDRESS
FRINGING REEF WORKSHOP

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Workshop and briefly to tell you why there is a Workshop on Fringing Reefs.

As you know the last Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to be zoned is the Southern Section. The second last was the Central Section adjacent to Townsville. When we were zoning the Central Section it was apparent that quite a bit was known about the fringing reefs there largely because of the existence in the north of the research institution's, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University. But the same cannot be said about some of the reefs around the, Whitsunday area or the Cumberland Reefs further south. Very little is known about those reefs and the consciousness of the Authority was drawn to this situation when we began the process of preparing zoning plans in those areas.

Furthermore some of the 'major issues with which the Authority has had to deal over the years have focussed on fringing reefs and this continues' to be the case. All of you would have heard of the controversy surrounding the Shelburne Bay and Cape Tribulation fringing reefs, but the fringing reefs surrounding the Whitsunday Islands have also been a focus for some controversy for different users over the last zoning process. What not everyone might know is that in the old days at the end of the Second World War this Island - Magnetic Island - was surrounded by beautiful fringing reefs. Don Kinsey has photographs of Nelly Bay taken after the Second World War where the quality of the fringing reef was as good as you are likely to find on the Great Barrier Reef today.'

What caused the change? The answer to that sort of question will tell us all sorts of things about other fringing reefs on the Great Barrier Reef, as well as other reefs - not just fringing reefs. It's a fact that all too often commercial and recreational users of fringing reefs can degrade the qualities that brought people to use those fringing reefs in the first place. Some people have said that the challenge is to use 'the environment without using it up and that sort of thought can be expressed in many ways.

The principal goal of the Authority is to 'provide for the protection, wise use, appreciation and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef in perpetuity. Fringing reefs are an important part of this Region and a very important part of the total reef system, because generally speaking they are more accessible than other reefs and therefore are subject to greater use. We believe that activities that depend on the reef or parts of it require that the use of renewable resources should be held at levels that can be sustained forever. All of our management activities are directed towards that end, although it would be a mistake to pretend that we know what level of activities of any kind can be sustained forever. We are in the learning situation: and this work'shop is part of that process.'

Tourism perhaps more than any other activity could be regarded as the activity that is most compatible with conservation. **People come to reefal** areas for tourism purposes in order to see the natural qualities of the area. Therefore tourism perhaps more than **any** other activity should be working hand in glove with management and- the scientists to make sure that this precious resource is not degraded with time.

What do we hope the people who attend this workshop will get from it? Well we certainly hope and expect that at the end of the workshop you have new ideas and new information to take back and to apply in what you do. We hope that people who use the reef for tourism purposes will learn more about the characteristics of fringing reefs **that make** them especially interesting and exciting places to **visit** and to conserve. We know that if you are convinced of that then you are likely to take action to conserve them.

There are fewer representatives of the tourism industry here than we hoped and I guess that this illustrates the difficulties the Authority has met from the very start. There was a conference in Townsville last week run by the Townsville Development Bureau called "Tourism-taking up the Challenge" and a strange phenomenon that the Authority has noticed since it has been created is the fact that generally speaking the tourism industry does not recognise, by either putting in submissions in relation to zoning or by other actions, the dependence of that industry on the natural qualities of the Great Barrier Reef. If they do recognise this, they don't demonstrate it by their actions. This **workshop** was set up specifically to **help** the tourism industry develop programs that will in the long run meet their interests. We hope that in this workshop some of the issues that are related to tourism development are thought about and alternatives are considered to what might be seen to be damaging options. We rely on tourist operations to help spread the word about the Marine Park concept, that is - wise use in perpetuity. There will be offered during this workshop some positive solutions or suggestions in the form of educational manuals, snorkelling trail ideas and in design options that could be supported by the tourism industry.

We hope that the scientists that are here at this workshop get ideas about how to structure their science so that the results of the science will be usable by managers and by the tourism industry itself.

We hope that this workshop will tell us, the managers, what are the views of other interest groups, scientists, and the tourism industry; what are the trends; what are the local priorities; and what are the attitudes to zoning. In other words we hope that there is going to be a major exchange of information in this workshop.

It has been said that there are three great lies that have been **spread by** the human race since the creation of men and women. The **first** is that I shall still love you as much in the morning. The second is that my cheque is in the mail. And the third great lie that's been perpetrated through the ages is that **I'm** from the Government and I am here to help you. Now there are exceptions to every rule and we hope that this workshop shows that there are government agencies that are trying to help people to protect, use wisely, appreciate, and enjoy the Great Barrier Reef forever. Welcome to the Workshop.