
OPENING ADDRESS

Graeme Kelleher
Chairman, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Welcome. For some of you it is the first time you have attended a workshop sponsored by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Others may have attended one of our previous workshops on Coral Trout Assessment Techniques, Cyclone Winifred, Contaminants, and Fringing Reefs. Of importance too will be our next workshop: on Innovative Planning and Management in July 1988.

These workshops have an important role in assisting the Authority, to carry out its function of managing the Marine Park. Workshops are a mechanism for experts to work together to ensure that:

all available information can be identified and assessed, and

areas requiring further research are identified.

A GBRMPA management objective is to maintain the natural qualities of the reef while allowing reasonable use.

This workshop is being held in response to higher than average levels of phosphorus and nitrogen in some areas of the GBRMP. The sources of these nutrients are probably sewage outfalls and mainland run-off.

The natural qualities of the Reef are affected by nutrients. For example we know that most corals cannot survive chronic enhanced nutrient levels. Effects on other biota, such as crown of thorns starfish are not clear. Effects of enhanced nutrient levels and subsequent eutrophication in fresh and estuarine waters are widely known,

As managers, the Authority must know the sources and effects of nutrients to justify any regulation. We aim to minimise regulations consistent with maintaining the quality of reef resources.

The Contaminants Workshop in 1984 focused on heavy metals, hydrocarbons, PCBs and other organo-chlorines. It was concluded that the levels were so low as to be barely measurable. It was suggested at that Workshop that nutrients or sediments, primarily from mainland sources were more likely to have a greater impact on the Reef and should be a research priority. Subsequent research sponsored by the Authority, and data from monitoring of sewage outfalls indicate that levels of nutrients in some localised areas are high and increasing.

This workshop has been organised to first, give you all an opportunity to put forward any information and views that you may

have about this matter and second, to have you focus (through working groups) on the matter at a reef wide level and also for two locations: the Whitsunday Islands and Green Island.

The objectives of the workshop are:

To review briefly, and assess the status of knowledge concerning nutrients in the Great Barrier Reef Region and related research, in particular:

- i) types and sources of nutrients
- ii) the effects of enhanced nutrient levels on GBR biota and other coral reef biota
- iii) baseline and enhanced levels in inshore waters of the GBR Region.

To identify information gaps in our knowledge of nutrients in the GBR.

To determine whether there should be concern about the levels of nutrients in the Great Barrier Reef Region.

If concern is warranted, to determine a strategy for, and components of a management program that could include monitoring levels and effects of nutrients at specific sites and over the whole GBR Region.

To determine the feasibility of establishing a permissible level of nutrients in waste discharge and coastal run-off--i-n-to---t-he-Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

To review and advise on waste disposal practices and permitted activities.

To determine any other management implications.

We in the Authority greatly appreciate your participation in this workshop. Please help us to focus on the particular issues that are identified in the above objectives.
