

6. CONCLUSIONS

1. The mainland fringing reefs of the Cape Tribulation area are primarily developed on coastal sediment bodies, not against steep rocky headlands.
2. The reefs consist of a fossil, coral-rich, reef-flat with a seaward fringe of living coral. Further seawards, the reef abuts, and probably overlies, a muddy inner shelf unit. To landward, beach-beach ridge sands overlie the fossil reef-flat unit.
3. All sediments associated with the reef have high terrigenous contents ($>50\%$), indicating the reefs have always grown under heavy terrigenous influx. However, the rapid diagenesis of clays in the marine environment in this area precludes their use as tracers of discharge from individual drainage systems.
4. Radiocarbon dating of levelled dead microatolls and coral columns shows that they grew at a higher sea-level, indicating that the fossil reef-flat was produced by the mid-late Holocene sea-level fall.
5. There are virtually no data on the turbidity tolerances of Great Barrier Reef fringing reef corals and coral communities, nor on the variations experienced by these communities. Thus management authorities cannot assess accurately whether corals such as those at Cape Tribulation are growing well within their turbidity tolerances, or whether their existence would be threatened by even a small increase in turbidity.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank particularly Neil Mockett and Michael Gagan for their help with fieldwork. Neil Mockett and Chris Cuff undertook and interpreted the X-ray diffraction analyses. Dr Charlie Veron of the Australian Institute of Marine Science kindly provided his species list for the Cape Tribulation area reefs. Elizabeth Barnett drafted the maps. The project was supported by funds from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and a Special Research Grant from James Cook University.

ERRATUM

The two following references were inadvertently omitted from the main reference list :

Orme, G.R., Webb, J.P., Kelland, N.J. and Sargent, G.E.G. 1978. Aspects of the geological history and structure of the northern Great Barrier Reef. *Phil.Trans.roy.Soc.Lond.*, A291, 23-35.

Pickard, G.L., Donguy, J.R., Hennin, C. and Rougerie, F. 1977. A review of the physical oceanography of the Great Barrier Reef and western Coral Sea. *Aust.Inst.Mar.Sci., Monograph Ser.*, v.2, 134 pp.