

6. CONCLUSION

The search for a single, general, reef zonation and surface cover classification system which would serve all people mapping reef cover units for all time is a fruitless one because it would be so general that it would not fulfil specific needs. Consequently, special purpose classification systems have evolved. Here, a semi-hierarchically arranged classification system concerned with geomorphological reef covers and zonation on reefs of the Great Barrier Reef is proposed as a necessity to allow the recording of ground data and interpretations of remotely sensed imagery of the Great Barrier Reef. Further, an explicitly defined classification system such as this one can provide a consistent basis for comparing interpretations and comparing reefs of the GBR region.

The classification system now allows consistent and comparative interpretations of aerial and orbital imagery and ground conditions to proceed. It also allows other GBR scientists to be involved in a more meaningful communication about the Great Barrier Reef. But, as Harvey (1969) states "we should be prepared to change our classifications when it becomes clear that they have outlived their usefulness ... because classification is essentially a means to an end".