

Letter to the Editor – 19 May 2003

In reply to Rob Lowden – Reef Survey lacked in facts (Cairns Post Tuesday May 13)

I would like to opportunity to educate Mr Lowden about protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The GBRMP consists of a wide range of marine habitats, not just coral reefs. These non-reef environments, although not as attractive to tourists, are home to a wide array of important and unique marine organisms. They also play a critical role in the functioning of the overall marine environment of the GBRMP. Many reef fish for example carry out different parts of their lifecycles in various non-reef environments. They also provide foraging grounds for threatened marine species such as turtles and dugongs. To describe them as deep water, sand and mud is simplistic, and shows a basic lack of understanding of the marine ecology of this area. There are over 70 different marine habitat types in the GBR – only 10 are reefs. Most of these non-reef habitats have little or no protection from most extractive activities. The very low level of protection of the GBRMP (4.6%) will not protect the parks biodiversity, nor is it in the interests of an ecologically – and therefore economically-sustainable fishing industry.

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