



### **Coral Collecting a threat to Inshore Reefs**

Capricorn Conservation Council is concerned about the continued collecting of corals from reefs on the northern and eastern sides of Great Keppel Island following extensive flood damage in the region recently. Coral collectors have been intensely harvesting at Little Peninsular, Wreck Bay and Butterfish Bays over the past months following flooding from the Fitzroy River in February 2011.

A spokesperson for CCC said “There were collectors at Little Peninsular for four days this week and for two other periods in February and March. Whenever the weather comes good collectors are out there collecting as much as they can.”

“In spite of extensive damage to shallow fringing reefs in the Keppels, these sites may have been some of only a handful that escaped almost 100% mortality. If there are corals left alive there they may be affected by the stress of the flood anyway and may not survive the added stress of collection using hammer and chisel, followed by transport to their ultimate destination.”

In spite of assurance by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Queensland Fisheries who issue the coral collecting licenses that mortality has been ‘patchy’, full impact assessments of the flood damage to reefs have yet to be completed. “CCC considers that the precautionary approach should prevail under such circumstances. Even if there are healthy corals left on these reefs, surely these should be left undisturbed to help regenerate the damaged reefs.” the CCC spokesperson said.

In early June, CCC will meet with the GBRMPA and other stakeholders to discuss ways to engage regional Great Barrier Reef users and interest groups in collaborative efforts to protect the Reef. GBRMPA are continuing to contact potential participants and more will be known about who will be involved in the proposed forum soon.

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