



SHIPPING FINES DO NOT PROTECT THE REEF

Conservationists are discouraged by the very small fines imposed on the crew of the Signe Bulker bulk carrier which was caught taking a short cut through a Great Barrier Reef exclusion zone, near to where the Shen Neng collided with the Douglas Shoal in April 2010.

Michael McCabe, Coordinator of Capricorn Conservation Council said today that, “The fines of \$29,000 and \$24,000 for the chief and 3rd mate for breaching GBR shipping lanes are grossly inadequate. These amounts are just petty cash compared to the profits from coal (and expected from LNG) exports, and do not discourage shipping companies taking short cuts through the Reef.”

“While there have been improvements in tracking of ships since the Shen Neng incident, there has been no financial reparations for the significant damage to Douglas Shoals. The reef may take decades to recover and cost many millions of dollars to clean up the anti-fouling paint which prevents the recovery of marine life and corals. CCC believes more should be done to align and enforce federal and state compliance and penalties for GBR shipping incidents. The Gladstone Port Corporation should ban any shipping companies which do not comply with GBR shipping lanes,” Mr McCabe said.

“These shipping incidents are likely to increase with the planned massive expansion of coal and gas exports from Gladstone and through Keppel Bay from the proposed Balaclava Island coal port. Greatly improved compliance measures are critical to prevent catastrophic shipping collisions harming the environment of the Reef, our coastal waters and the economy.

Mr McCabe said that, “The threat of harm to the reef will increase with the planned massive expansion of coal and gas mining and exports. With Queensland tourism operators working hard to recover from the impacts of the recent floods, our precious environmental assets like the GBR need greater levels of protection from shipping accidents.”