

Green Manure Continues to Pollute the GBR

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Hardly a week passes without a new media report of some dire threat to the Great Barrier Reef. Most are speculation, something that *could* happen *if* A few are blatant fabrications immediately apparent by just looking at the source reference which turns out to be nothing like what the media reports say. A clear example of this appeared a few days ago.

A *Brisbane Times* article datelined August 9, 2007 was entitled, **Barrier Reef needs \$300m clean-up: WWF**. It stated that, "Conservationists say the federal government either invests \$300 million on a Great Barrier Reef clean-up or risks its destruction. International conservation organisation WWF said the reef was endangered by 14 million tonnes of chemicals and mud washed from farms onto the reef each year."

<http://news.brisbanetimes.com.au/barrier-reef-needs-300m-cleanup-wwf/20072909-sfv.html>

On August 11, 2007 *The Australian* featured a news item headed **Great Barrier Reef 'swamped by pollutants**. It reported, "CANCER-causing pollutants and insecticides are pouring out to the Great Barrier Reef from contaminated rivers, a major study has found.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22226193-1702,00.html>

The new study being referred to was published by the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority*. Their own news release, however, makes no mention of any need for a \$300 million clean-up to save the reef or pollutants pouring onto it from contaminated rivers. What it did say was that, "We now have a comprehensive water quality monitoring programme in place for the Reef...."

"Data collected over the first 18 months of the monitoring programme have improved our understanding of Great Barrier Reef rivers, inshore waters, inshore reefs and seagrass ecosystems."

"The monitoring programme provides a critical component of the assessment of any long-term improvement in regional water quality that will occur as best land management practices are widely adopted across Great Barrier Reef catchments...."

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/media/media_archive/2007/report_sheds_light_on_water_quality_in_the_great_barrier_reef

Then I went to the original voluminous report.

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/water_quality/marine_monitoring/marine_monitoring_report_2006

It mentioned that coral growth around river mouths tends to be reduced and nutrients are higher in inshore waters where major rivers discharge into the lagoon. This, of course, is normal natural and expected anywhere. No evidence of detrimental or increasing levels of sediments or nutrients was reported and no assessment was made of human vs. natural contribution to the reported levels.

Traces of herbicides and pesticides were found in all of the rivers. It would be astounding if they were not found as they can be detected everywhere else on Earth. None were at levels considered to be harmful and no indication of any transport to or influence on the reef was mentioned.

It appears clear that the media has just concocted their own version of a news item from the WWF handout.

The Williams review of water quality impacts

David Williams in 2001 in his comprehensive *Review of Impacts of Terrestrial Run-off on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area* found:

“... clear impacts of enhanced run-off of sediments, nutrients and contaminants (as a result of land use) on coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem have proven difficult to detect. Impacts are unlikely for the majority of reefs that are located well offshore.”

“...extensive phytoplankton studies have found biomass and composition consistent with an unimpacted system”

“Studies to date have generally found low concentrations of ... pollutants, indicative of a relatively unpolluted environment.”

“It is tempting to conclude that the water quality status of the central Great Barrier Reef is not at immediate risk and that at current nutrient input rates, external sources will have little future impact on water quality within the central Great Barrier Reef region.”

Other Studies

The following are quotes of similar findings from various other studies:

“It is believed that increased sediment supply to the Great Barrier Reef will not increase sediment accumulation or turbidity at most coral reefs, because these factors are not currently limited by sediment supply. Turbidity in nearshore areas is primarily caused by wind-driven re-suspension of bottom sediment. Most of this sediment is not recent but has accumulated over the last five or six thousand years as the sea has inundated the continental shelf and risen to its current level.”

“Tissue samples of liver and blubber were salvaged from fifty-three dugong. In general, concentrations of organochlorines were similar to those reported in dugong 20 years earlier, and were low in comparison to concentrations recorded from marine mammal tissue collected elsewhere in the world.”

“Increased sediment loss resulting from unsustainable grazing management in the upper Burdekin catchment has been identified as a major threat to water quality in the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon. To test the effects of different grazing management strategies on soil and nutrient loss, five 1 ha mini-catchments were established in 1999 under different grazing management regimes on a sedimentary landscape south of Charters Towers. Reference samples from creeks and rivers in the district were also collected opportunistically during runoff events. In general, soil and nutrient loss were relatively low across all grazing strategies water quality was high across all strategies with relatively low levels of total suspended sediment The present data suggest, that at least on the relatively flat, sedimentary landscapes, extensive cattle grazing is compatible with achieving high levels of water quality....”

“The budgets developed indicate that instantaneous nutrient availability within central Great Barrier Reef shelf waters is still largely controlled by natural input and recycling processes.”

“there has been a reduction in the use of nitrogen, particularly in sugarcane areas, since the peak of 1980. This has been largely due to reduced rates of application”

“the ENCORE project, where floating robots at One Tree Island at the southern end of the Reef added small amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus - three times the natural levels - to small pristine lagoons, or micro-atolls, recently proved there was no resulting increased growth of algae. Even submerged plates of algae subjected to water enriched at 20 times normal levels experienced no enhanced growth.

“ENCORE project leader, Professor Tony Larkum of Sydney University said, "We have conclusively established that persistent, small increases in nutrients have no effect on the algae."

Reality vs. Eco-propaganda

There is simply no scientific evidence for detrimental or increasing pollution of the GBR. All actual evidence is indicative of a vast near pristine region. However, good news doesn't generate headlines or funding and the media, green groups, researchers and bureaucrats endlessly flog phoney threats to the reef for their own gain. It appears that certain groups have been granted the right to practice fraud with immunity.