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YOUR REF:

TL:CL:LMAC

OUR REF:

12 September 2002

By Fax & Mail: (02) 6240 3355

Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616**Re: Submission to Productivity Commission Investigation Into Great Barrier Reef Catchment and Measures to Address Declining Water Quality.**

Rosemary and Tony Lee of this firm have been active boating residents in the North Queensland region since coming originally to Townsville from Melbourne in 1973, and to Mission Beach in 1983 where we have resided ever since and carried on business in this firm.

We have cruised Barrier Reef waters from the Whitsundays through to Princess Charlotte Bay and in fact in our previous vessel logged 22,000 cruising miles over approximately 13 years in that area, and in the present vessel over the last 5 years approximately 12,000 nautical miles.

During all periods our activities covered the general recreational boating scope: line fishing, snorkelling, spear fishing, island / reef exploration, and general familiarisation with this beautiful region in which we live.

We have both been alarmed at the visual deterioration particularly with inshore reefs between Townsville and Cape Tribulation. These include the inner Barrier Reefs such as Bramble, Britomart, Otter, Sudbury, Bat, Tongue, and Rudder. Outer reefs such as Potter, Opal, and Agincourt are less affected.

We began to notice a deterioration during the 1980's, but in this region noticed it more markedly in the early to mid 1990's.

We have noted that a lot of former sugar cane and cattle grazing land in this region went under bananas in the early 1990's. King Ranch is a good example. It is in one of the highest rainfall areas in the Barrier Reef catchment, and we simply query, without specific knowledge ourselves, as to whether this increase in banana land has a direct

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correlation to the deterioration of inshore reefs. Around the inshore islands particularly the deterioration in fringing reefs around the Family Group and the Brooks Group is catastrophic.

We make the following points:-

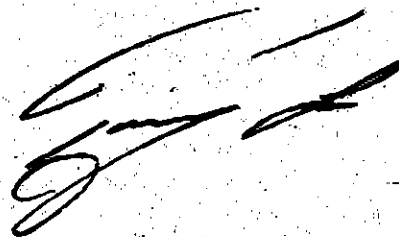
- From our knowledge gained in this practice in acting for cane and banana farming activities, banana farming is much more fertiliser-intensive
- Banana farming involves a much more "bare earth" technique than sugar cane thus rendering it liable as an activity to more run-off into streams and creeks ultimately feeding into the reef catchment area.
- Unfortunately bananas thrive best in the highest rainfall areas in the super-wet belt such as our own, where we have noticed the deterioration in reef quality the greatest.
- Once one travels north of Cape Tribulation inshore reef quality improves markedly. This indicates to us as lay people that farming activities of whatever nature, have a direct bearing on both and therefore reef health / degeneration.

We do not set ourselves up as experts, only very devoted reef lovers who wish to do all we can to preserve this region.

Tony Lee is an active member on the LMAC (Local Marine Advisory Committee) to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Mission Beach area). He is also president of Mission Beach Seabed Watch Inc., sponsored by GBRMPA to monitor the return of seagrass in the Rockingham Bay / family group of islands subsequent to the recent trawl closure which LMAC had achieved after many years of lobbying Federal and State Government. Over-fishing by commercial line and net fishers in the reef lagoon area is also one of our LMAC's major concerns, in addition of course to the water quality issue.

We trust the above is of some assistance. If you have any queries at all please do not hesitate to contact us at the above address / phone / email.

Yours sincerely



Tony & Rosemary Lee