



## **NON DETRIMENT FINDING FOR CITES-LISTED CORALS IN THE QUEENSLAND CORAL FISHERY**

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Commercial-scale coral collection occurs in three parts of Australia – the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland. This report provides a case study of the management history and arrangements for the Queensland Coral Fishery (QCF); limited contextual information is provided on the other two fisheries. A small licensed fishery has existed in Queensland on the Great Barrier Reef since 1932, though large quantities of coral were removed prior to that, mainly for the production of lime. In its current form, the QCF is a small, limited entry, quota-based fishery that operates almost exclusively in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) and World Heritage Area (WHA).

The GBRMP is the southern extremity of the Coral Triangle – the global hotspot for coral biodiversity. It covers an area of 345,400km<sup>2</sup> and includes a large range of both reefal and inter-reefal habitat types. There are more than 350 species of hard coral on the Great Barrier Reef. Of these, 52 genera/species of CITES-listed corals are regularly collected in the QCF - to date, about 23 of these species have been exported in any numbers. The vast majority of the catch for the QCF is live rock, none of which is currently exported. The remainder of the catch is composed of a diverse range of coral and coral-like species including hard and soft corals, zooanthids, and corallimorphs – many of which are not CITES-Listed. The fishery predominantly supplies the domestic and international live aquarium markets, though a small proportion of the catch goes to the ornamental coral market.

Collection of the small quota (200T per annum) is managed under a comprehensive multi-jurisdictional framework. This report documents the approach taken in the QCF to:

- Integrate multi-jurisdictional management under a risk-based, adaptive management framework to address the particular concerns regarding a coral fishery operating in a multiple-use marine park and WHA
- Work collaboratively with fishers and the community to develop key elements of the management arrangements and generate practical solutions to often intractable problems
- Meet the CITES Non Detriment Finding requirement for hard corals
- Consider how to manage for cumulative impacts (including climate change) and encourage and support stewardship initiatives to promote ecosystem resilience

It is hoped that the lessons learned through this process may assist with improving the global capacity to make consistent, risk-based NDF assessments for coral given the current poor fit between an extremely diverse and taxonomically complex group and a system originally intended for single species assessments. It is noted that a range of factors (other than just collection) affect the conservation status of corals, including cumulative impacts from coastal development, water quality, destructive fishing, industrial scale removal of coral and, into the future, climate change impacts resulting from increasing sea surface temperature, sea level rise and ocean acidification. It is proposed that further consideration should be given to strengthening the CITES framework and seeking integration with other international conventions to more explicitly address these matters.