



CRC TORRES STRAIT VISIT BY RESEARCHER

Searching for unwanted marine creatures in Torres Strait



Marine plants and animals can be carried across thousands of kilometres of ocean on the hulls of recreational, fishing and commercial boats, and in the ballast water of ships. Most of these creatures will not live through the trip. But, sometimes, some of these exotic marine creatures will survive to become pests in their new homes.

Although more than 200 marine creatures have been introduced into Australian waters, only a few of these have become pests and affect the recreational, commercial and natural values of the coast. Finding invading species when they first arrive, can make sure that these creatures are controlled and do not become pests.

In the Torres Strait, there is a high risk that marine creatures will be introduced from overseas because there are a lot of vessels travelling through the area. However, we do not know whether there are any introduced marine species in the Torres Strait, and what impact they are having.

To find out if there are any exotic marine species in the Torres Strait, scientists will check the Port of Thursday Island. The survey will help to check the health of the native animals and plants in the port and surrounding areas. This can be used to make sure that the Torres Strait environment and economic value of the ocean resources in the Torres Strait are protected.

Trip dates: 18 – 28 March 2004.

The work: The team will work from a small boat in Thursday Island harbour and shipping channels from 19-27 March 2004. They will be SCUBA diving, trawling, netting and collecting samples of the sea bed.

The team: Dr Kerry Neil (project leader), Mr Heath Stafford, Ms Esther Fondon (visiting Kenyan scientist), Mr Dave Foster, Mr Ross Thomas and Dr Michael Rasheed.

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