

## Artificial Reefs = Artificial Catches?

with Dr John Thorogood (Principal Ecologist)

29 October 2010

*If you're a fishing enthusiast then it looks like this is your lucky day.*

Anglers around Moreton Bay will soon be reaping the benefits of six new artificial reefs, which will give them improved access to the bounty of the bay. The recreational benefits are clear. Anglers will have the ability to yield an esky full of fresh fish despite the green no fishing zones. But at frc environmental we are left thinking, "what environmental impacts will this have on the Bay?"

As Dr John Thorogood points out, the decision to create these artificial reefs appears to be driven by politics rather than science. It seems the effects of the reefs on the Bay have not been considered beyond the surface benefits.

### We know an artificial reef will attract fish – but it won't create fish.

The species that anglers target over reefs typically depend on a mosaic of inshore habitat such as mangroves and seagrass meadows. As such, for sustained and long-term increases in fish populations, these are the habitats that we need to conserve and expand.

While we agree the new artificial reefs will provide a temporary buffet for fishermen, the long-term sustainability of the project is questionable. Looking deeper into the issue, it could be detrimental to the sustainability of the fish targeted by anglers. Species like bream, gray emperor, moses perch, painted sweet-lip and mangrove jack are at risk. The only exception to this is when these reefs 'capture' larvae spawned on the Great Barrier Reef and carried southward by the East-Australian Current.

We need to be honest about the environmental effects of these artificial reefs - their real purpose is to lure fish, into a fishable zone, not to preserve the stock of fish in the protected reefs. There is also concern about who will be responsible for monitoring the effects of these artificial reefs on fish stocks. Marine Parks will monitor the development of marine biota on the new reefs, but who will monitor the impact these reefs have on fish stocks?

Where is the science?

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