

# Reef under threat from floodwater

By **BETTINA GIARDINA**

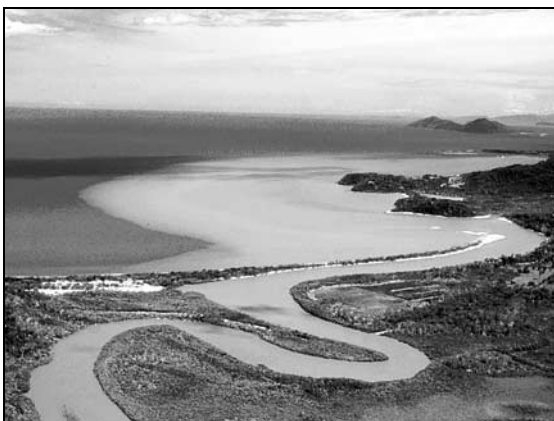
COMMERCIAL fishermen have called for urgent action on threats to the Great Barrier Reef caused by floodwater.

This follows the release of a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) report which confirms pollution in floodwaters is a serious threat to the reef's health.

The report revealed floodwaters that discharge onto the inshore reefs of the marine park carry nutrient levels 10-15 times higher than those measured in non-flood conditions.

The research showed concentrations of dissolved nutrients in flood plumes were considerably above those known to produce adverse effects on coral reef ecosystems, in particular, reductions in the ability of corals to reproduce and increases in coral death.

GBRMPA director of water quality Sheriden Morris said yesterday the report showed that the inshore reefs and seagrass beds adjacent to Wet Tropics agricul-



**TIME TO ACT ... the paler muddy water from a river merges with the sea**

tural catchments (Townsville to Cooktown) were at greatest risk from pollution from the catchments.

Commercial fishermen's representative John Olsen said the impact of land use along the east coast on adjacent coastal waters was a major environmental and economic issue.

"This is threatening the survival of seagrass bed and other habitats that are the foundation of our \$700 million-a-year seafood industry," Mr Olsen said.

"It is vital that action be taken urgently to re-

duce run-off of soil, nutrient and chemicals from farming activities along the coast."

Mr Olsen called on the State Government to implement recommendations made by the Reef Task Force last year.

The task force recommended the development of a protection plan encompassing best practice farm management and rehabilitation of riverside vegetation.

It further recommended the establishment of an advisory panel to oversee water quality and commit resources to the plan.