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## Ship grounding demands long-term reef monitoring

A long-term monitoring program is needed to measure the impact on and recovery of the Great Barrier Reef after the *Shen Neng 1* ship grounding, according to a leading natural resource management group.

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc (FBA) chief executive officer Suzie Christensen has suggested the Queensland Government use the fine collected from the ship's owners to kick-start an integrated long-term monitoring program with dedicated staffing resources.

"We are right on the doorstep of the reef here and we know that despite the good efforts of GBRMPA and AIMS, current measures to monitor reef health are inadequate – it is sporadic, under-funded and under-resourced," Mrs Christensen said.

FBA coordinates the delivery of the natural resource management plan for the Fitzroy Basin: the second largest catchment draining to the east coast of Australia and the largest reef-draining catchment.

"The accident in Douglas Shoal involving a Chinese bulk coal carrier has brought home the fact that we don't have the systems in place to fully understand and learn from the damage caused by such an incident," Mrs Christensen said.

She said the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority reported the ship grounding caused scarring across an area of around 2.5 kilometres, including large areas where the reef has been ground to gravel and covered with anti-fouling paint.

"The impacts of this damage on fish stocks and the ecological health of the southern Great Barrier Reef in the long-term need to be understood," she said.

"We need to channel our outrage about this breach into a renewed focus on how we monitor and manage the reef. This should give us a wake-up call to ensure that the risks associated with the massive expansion in shipping traffic anticipated in the near future from the coal and gas industries are managed very carefully."

Mrs Christensen said the government had indicated that reef protection was a high priority through the Queensland Reef Protection Bill and support for the Australian Government's Reef Rescue funding initiative.

"Reef Rescue is enabling us to work with hundreds of landholders through voluntary partnerships to help them avoid polluting the reef through improved land management.

"This represents a serious investment in improving water quality and marine ecosystem health by reducing contaminants entering the reef lagoon.

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“It makes sense to couple these efforts with investment in a comprehensive monitoring program to help us keep track of what the impacts on the reef actually are over time.

“One way to make this happen could be to fund a monitoring program with the fine payable by the shipping company responsible for the accident,” she said.

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