

## In Brief

### 'One child' policy for Australia?

Dr John Coulter from Sustainable Population Australia has controversially called for Australia to adopt a 'humane population strategy ... of an average of one child per family' to help avert a 'cull imposed by nature' in the 21st century.

In a media release issued on World Population Day (11 July), Dr Coulter noted that Australia's and the world's populations have trebled in one lifetime due to the availability of cheap oil and energy. Current or increased population levels could not be globally sustained in the post-peak-oil era, he said.

He added if countries like Australia did not lead the way by adopting a population reduction strategy 'nature will do the job for us by starvation, disease, warfare and social and economic collapse'.

### Warmer Tibet, lower flows

China's Xinhua news agency reports that Tibet is warming up faster than anywhere else on the planet, with the average annual temperature rising by 0.3 degrees Celsius every 10 years.

Tibet – known as 'the roof of the world' – is Asia's principal watershed and the source of its major rivers, with most starting as base flows from groundwater and glacial sources. Rivers originating in Tibet include the Yellow, Brahmaputra, Yangtze, Indus and Mekong rivers.

Chinese scientists have warned that rising temperatures on the Qinghai-Tibet plateau will melt glaciers, causing major Chinese rivers to dry up, and triggering more droughts, sandstorms and desertification.

### A warning and action on coral reef conservation



A new agreement will protect Pacific cold-water, deep-sea corals from bottom trawling. Alberto Lindner, NOAA Fisheries

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef from the impacts of climate change, natural disasters and rising human pressures will be a key test of Australia's ability to keep our natural environment healthy and resilient.

That's the message from Professor Malcolm McCulloch of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies to a recent conference of the International Council

on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Cairns.

'If Australia can't save the Great Barrier Reef, then no-one anywhere in the world can save their coral reefs,' Professor McCulloch warns.

'We know the threats posed by coral bleaching, ocean acidification, rapid sea level rise and increased coastal erosion. It's about what we can do in the way we manage the reef and look after it that will mitigate

those threats.'

Across the Tasman, New Zealand has led a host of other countries, including Australia, in agreeing to prevent bottom trawling, a fishing method that involves dragging trawl nets along the sea floor, damaging coral reefs in international waters of the South Pacific.

Due to take effect on 30 September 2007, the agreement will ensure bottom trawling does not exceed current levels or expand into new areas. Existing activities may only continue if they prove that they will not adversely affect vulnerable marine ecosystems such as cold water corals and sponge fields.

This agreement fulfils Australia's obligations under the 2006 United Nations General Assembly resolution on sustainable fisheries.

Under Australian law fisheries must minimise their catch of non-target species, to mitigate interactions with protected species and to ensure the protection of critical habitats of protected species.

In the Great Barrier Reef bottom trawling is permitted, but a strict management plan aims to minimise impacts by restricting the area available for trawling, number of fishing days and boats, and through the use of Turtle Excluder Devices and Bycatch Reduction Devices.

### P back in the loop after S bend?

With the world's phosphorus deposits due to expire in 50 years, a University of Technology Sydney researcher has called for large-scale recycling of human urine, a highly concentrated source of the essential plant nutrient.

According to Associate Professor Cynthia Mitchell, recycling the 500 litres of urine produced by each person annually will solve the looming global shortage of phosphorus.

Mitchell points out that new homes in one farming area of Sweden are already required to have urine-separation toilets in which urine is directed to a holding tank, emptied regularly for fertiliser.

The Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water is running a small-scale trial of the toilets in the Currumbin Valley, near the Gold Coast.



A trial of urine-separation toilets is currently underway in Queensland.