

follows that there must exist some guidance regarding international trade in these invertebrates somewhere within the Convention. Well, on investigation, it appears that most of the claims which the DoE is making as being necessary before moving forward are not valid. So, where does all this leave us? The answer is: in a totally ridiculous situation that defies all logic.

Let's be generous and say that, perhaps, the repeated delays and all their devastating consequences, arise from a lack of knowledge of how to handle the matter within the relevant government department(s). Could the fact that they seem to change their demands and request new information from meeting to meeting be interpreted as adding some weight to this possibility? Maybe. Then again, are we, perhaps, being too generous?

Meanwhile, jobs have been, and are being lost, along with valuable export revenue for the local and national economy. Walt Smith International, for example, can no longer offer any work at all to more than 60% of its former staff and is losing sales on a massive scale. Clearly, the situation is desperate indeed, and doubly so because it's all so unnecessary. How, for instance, can the local reefs be suffering when - as I have reported in other instalments - more coral mass is being returned to the wild than is actually harvested for subsequent culture? Since I've dealt with this issue at some length in earlier editions, I won't repeat myself here, but would urge interested readers to seek them out.

A final thought...

On 7 March of this year, the Fijian Ministry of Fisheries lifted the export ban that had been imposed over the Xmas/New Year period. However, it is the Department of the Environment that is standing in the way of the resumption of exports. Could we be witnessing a similar situation of inter-departmental confusion as that which is currently crippling Indonesian coral exports? ■

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“ the nation's live coral and live rock export sector is 'reeling against the ropes' and in danger of total collapse.

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