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**Evidence of coral bleaching.** Picture: James Brown

# Bleaching sounds marine alarm bells

■ **Glenn Cordingley**

Widespread coral bleaching has surfaced for the first time in the tourist playground of Broome.

The extent is unknown but Broome-based marine biologist James Brown estimated 70 per cent of hard and soft corals off Reddell Beach were bleached.

His discovery was illustrated by several photographs he took on a low 7m tide on April 11, in

which normally healthy marine invertebrates had turned white.

"There has never been a reported mass bleaching event on the inshore Kimberley reefs before," he said.

Mr Brown is director of the Kimberley Marine Research Station based at Cygnet Bay on the Dampier Peninsula.

"It means there are now a few reefs on the inshore Kimberley coast that have been looked at by

researchers and appear to have significant coral bleaching, which I would suggest makes it a mass coral bleaching event," he said, adding it was now important to identify its extent and severity.

"We need to learn as much as possible and try to figure out how a coral bleach manifests on the Kimberley which, with its macro-tides, is a very different tropical marine system," he said.