



Melitidae, the *Eriopisella* group*

MICHELLE N. YERMAN^{1,2}

¹Crustacea Section, Australian Museum, 6 College Street, Sydney, NSW 2010, Australia

²School of Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management, University of New England, National Marine Science Centre, Charlesworth Bay, Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, 2450, Australia.

(michelle.yerman@austmus.gov.au)

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Abstract

A new species of eriopisellid amphipod, belonging to the genus *Netamelita* Barnard, 1962, is described. This is the first and only amphipod from the *Eriopisella* group reported from the Great Barrier Reef.

Keywords: Crustacea, Amphipoda, *Eriopisella* group, Great Barrier Reef, Australia, taxonomy, new species *Netamelita lacerta*

Introduction

Amphipods in the *Eriopisella* group have a disjointed global distribution. They occur in the Mediterranean Sea, the Canary Islands, the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida keys, California, Hawaii, southern Africa, Mauritius, Madagascar and Japan (J.L. Barnard 1962; McKinney *et al.* 1978; Stock 1980; Ledoyer 1983; Karaman 1984; Thomas & Barnard 1991). However, with continued investigations their distribution may prove to be much wider. Eriopisellid amphipods can be found in the sediments of shallow coral reefs (this study), shelly gravel (Karaman, 1984) or in coral-algal muds 30–40 m deep (Thomas & Barnard 1991).

To date, the genus *Netamelita* has not been reported from outside the southern United States or the Caribbean. This paper describes a species of *Netamelita* J.L. Barnard, 1962, from the Great Barrier Reef. This is the first documented record from north-eastern Australia. *Netamelita* shows a close resemblance to *Psammomelita* Vonk, 1988. Vonk (1988) discussed these similarities concluding that they were separate genera based on four unique characters that only *Psammomelita* possesses: (1) hooks that emerge from the sterna of pleonites 1–3 on the medial sides of the pleopods; (2) a curved keel on the male maxillipeds; (3) a weaker lobe on the carpus of gnathopod 2 and (4) heavy serrations on the posterior margin of pereopods 5–7. Thomas & Barnard (1991) later revised the genus *Netamelita*, agreeing that it was different to *Psammomelita* and re-defined the diagnostic characters. They concluded that *Psammomelita* was different to *Netamelita* based on above characters, however, they omitted the fourth as some species of *Netamelita* also possess heavy serrations on pereopods 5–7.

Materials and methods

The descriptions were generated from a DELTA database (Dallwitz 2005) to the melitid genera and species of the world. Material was hand-collected on scuba and is lodged in the Australian Museum, Sydney (AM). A set