

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 322

Hearing: Budget Estimates

Outcome: Agency

Program: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Topic: Bleaching event in Winter 2008

Hansard Page: -

Question Date: 6 March 2017

Question Type: Written

Senator Roberts asked:

The ABC reported a bleaching event in the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef during record cold temperatures across much of Queensland in the winter of 2008. Was there such a bleaching event?

If so, isn't that an entirely natural response from the reef due to extreme cold weather?

Answer:

In 2008-2009, extremely high rainfall in Queensland led to flooding and the discharge of large amounts of freshwater to nearshore reefs, resulting in freshwater bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef. This bleaching event was not related to cold temperatures.

Corals live within a natural thermal range and can become stressed if subjected to temperatures outside this range for extended periods. Mass bleaching events, such as those in 1998, 2002 and 2016, are generally caused by sustained thermal stress (high temperatures).