

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

Question No: 327

Hearing: Additional Estimates

Outcome: Agency

Program: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Topic: Northern zone

Hansard Page: N/A

Question Date: 6 March 2017

Question Type: Written

Senator Roberts asked:

My understanding from GBRMPA's latest report is that the GBR has been divided into three zones and that only the northern zone is currently stressed?

If true, would that not indicate the threat is local and specific to the northern region and not global?

Answer:

For ongoing management and communication purposes, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority divides the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park into four management areas – Far Northern, Cairns/Cooktown (Northern), Townsville/Whitsundays (Central) and Mackay/Capricorn (Southern).

In 2016, bleaching was widespread and most severe in the far northern and parts of the northern management areas. In 2017 to-date, bleaching has been widespread but most severe between Townsville and Port Douglas, which spans the Central and Northern management areas.

Sea surface temperatures throughout the majority of the Marine Park were above long-term monthly averages for the entire 2017 summer.

The current bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef is part of the ongoing third global bleaching event which was declared by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 2015.