

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

Question No: 76

Hearing: Supplementary Estimates

Outcome: Agency

Programme: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Topic: Impact of Godzilla El Nino on the Great Barrier Reef

Hansard Page:

Question Date: 22 October 2015

Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

1. Based on previous experience, what impact do you expect the 'Godzilla El Nino', if it occurs, to have on the Reef, and on the implementation of the Strategy?

Answer:

1. Climatologists are comparing the current El Niño to the 1997-98 El Niño, which was the strongest in recorded history. That event caused widespread coral bleaching world-wide, due to ocean warming of ~ +2°C above the long-term average. On the Great Barrier Reef, approximately 50 per cent of coral reefs were affected and five per cent of the Reef died as a result.

It is too soon to predict the potential damage to the Great Barrier Reef; local weather such as cloud cover and rainfall can ameliorate the effects of temperature on coral.

Through the Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan, the government is committed to a range of actions, such as significant investment to improve water quality, to build the resilience of the Reef ecosystem to improve its ability to cope with future stress.