

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

Question No: 347
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Program: Director of National Parks (DNP)
Topic: Australia's Marine Environment
Hansard Page: n/a
Question Date: 01 November 2016
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Noting the increasing incidence of coral bleaching, mangrove decline and loss of kelp forests as but three indications of pressure, what is the Director of National Parks' understanding of the state of Australia's marine environment – is it declining or improving?

Answer:

The most recent State of the Environment report (2011) indicates that, when compared with the marine waters of other nations, Australia's oceans are in good condition, which is a “[..] *testament to the limited pressures of the past century, combined with relatively good management of high–priority and emerging issues in recent years*”¹. This is reflected in the high standing that Australia enjoys internationally as a leader in marine environment protection and fisheries management.

The report also points to pressures on many of Australia's marine ecosystems and species in, and close to, the coastal zone, particularly where urban and industrial activities are intense and result in habitat loss or modification. The report also highlights that major changes to global marine environments are to be expected as a result of climate change and related impacts, for example acidification. Other global issues, such as marine debris and microplastics contamination, are also a pressure on Australia's marine environment. The Australian Government is actively addressing these challenges, both domestically and internationally.

¹ State of the Environment 2011 Committee. Australia state of the environment 2011. Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Canberra: DSEWPac, 2011