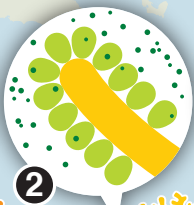


Two-thirds of Great Barrier Reef bleached

Australia's Great Barrier Reef is suffering from another massive bleaching event, the first time in memory such episodes have hit in back-to-back calendar years

GREAT BARRIER REEF (World heritage area)

Largest living structure on Earth nurtures around 1,500 species of fish



WHAT IS BLEACHING

1 Healthy coral: Algae, known as *zooxanthellae*, lives in coral tissue, providing primary food and colour

2 Stressed coral: As water approaches 31°C, coral polyps expell algae from tissue

3 Bleached coral: Without algae, coral turns white and loses main source of food

Coral can recover if normal conditions return, but if stress continues it dies

AUSTRALIA

- Most severe bleaching in 2016
- Most severe bleaching in 2017
- No or negligible bleaching

2017 bleaching hit central section, causing damage to spread 640km further south

CAUSES OF BLEACHING

- Rising water temperatures resulting from natural warm currents
- Exacerbated by man-made climate change, as oceans absorb around 90% of increase in Earth's heat
- Latest damage occurred without *El Niño* weather pattern, associated with 2016 and earlier bleaching events



CORAL SEA

250km

150 miles