

Great Barrier Reef

One of the planet's greatest natural wonders is dying on our watch, with climate change and cattle being the biggest culprits.

Background

Australia's magnificent Great Barrier Reef is so large it can be seen from space. It is home to at least 1,500 fish species, 215 bird species, and countless dolphins, whales, snakes, turtles, and - of course - living corals. The millions of fascinating marine animals and beautiful corals that live within this marine park make the Great Barrier Reef a true environmental and social treasure, deserving of its listing as both a Natural Wonder and World Heritage Area. The Great Barrier Reef is also a huge asset to the Australian economy ([valued at \\$56 Billion](#)): more than two million tourists visit the marine park each year, contributing \$5-6 billion to the national economy and supporting an estimated 67,000 full-time jobs.

Unfortunately, however, over-fishing, pollution, and climate change are putting the entire Great Barrier Reef at risk, jeopardising our enjoyment of it, and, most importantly, the lives that depend on it. Commercial and recreational [fishing](#), which reduces the proportion of predators to prey, are significantly affecting the reef's ecosystem while [pollutants, chiefly from cattle grazing and sugar cane growing](#), are running into the reef's catchments, damaging habitats and stunting and killing corals.

Corals require warm water to thrive, but are highly sensitive to too much heat. But [greenhouse gas emissions and global temperatures](#) have continued to rise, and now the basic ocean temperature is so high that temperature spikes can pose a critical risk to the reef. Scientists say they have no doubt that climate change is responsible for [bleaching](#) of the reef. The push to expand Australia's already massive coal output with the huge [Adani mine](#) shows an ignorant disregard for both the reef and decades of climate science.

The head of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority confirmed in 2017 that recent back-to-back bleachings may have [killed off](#) as much as half the reef. Dr Reichelt said that we have already passed safe levels of global warming for the reef, and that the best science suggests global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees: there has already been a 0.7 degree warming over the past century. Certainly major structural and social [changes](#) are required

to ensure the continuing existence of the Great Barrier Reef, including phasing out the cattle industry. On an individual level, the effects of pollutants, fishing and climate change on the reef's marine life can all be reduced through moving to a plant-based diet.

Policy

For thirty years the [biggest factor](#) affecting the Great Barrier Reef has been the increased sediment and fertiliser carried into reef waters by all the rivers flowing eastwards in far north Queensland. This sediment and fertiliser comes from pasture on land cleared for cattle.

Recent coral bleaching, exacerbated by climate change, is compounding the threats to the reef.

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) focus on plant based eating works like a swiss army knife in that it works on multiple environmental issues at the same time; in this case climate change and the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

As in other areas, AJP policies target major causes rather than easy targets of minor importance.

Related policies:

1. Marine animals
2. Climate change

Key Objectives

1. To phase out the cattle industry, starting with bans on further land clearing and the fertilisation of pasture; prioritising those regions closest to the most vulnerable parts of the reef.
2. To ban any new coal and natural gas operations; this is part of our general climate change policy.
3. Similarly, the phasing out of all fossil fuel production and export would see a reduction in bulk carriers passing through the reef.
4. To set clear enforceable regulations on any other industry likely to adversely affect the reef; for example sugar, which is also a sediment and fertiliser culprit.



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