

**Statement from Professor Terry Hughes, Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies:**

Preamble: I try to avoid using “threat”. If you threaten to punch me in the nose, it’s something that may or may not happen in the future. Scientists have been studying the “threat” of coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef since 1998, then the hottest year on record. Repeated mass mortality of corals in 1998, 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2022 and 2024 means that anthropogenic heating is no longer some distant threat – it’s already the primary danger for the Reef.

**1. Is it possible that the threat to the Reef has been overstated?**

Thirty percent of corals on the Great Barrier Reef died in 2016 due to extreme heat <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-018-0041-2>. The summer of 2024 was even hotter and for longer, and losses of corals are more widespread than in any previous bleaching event. Most individual reefs have experienced bleaching 2 or 3 times since 2016. The gaps that are essential for recovery are getting shorter and shorter.

**2. If the threat to the Reef from bleaching and climate change is so grave, why is the coral cover at record or near-record levels?**

Coral cover is a very poor metric for assessing the “health” of a coral reef – because it tells you nothing about sudden changes in the mix of species, about the sizes and ages of surviving corals, or about rates of birth and death. Long-term monitoring of coral cover hasn’t been completed yet after bleaching in Feb-March 2024. Higher than average coral cover in 2023 was due to the recovery of fast-growing, short-lived branching and table corals that are also very heat-sensitive. Millions of them are now dead.

**3. Do any reef scientists share Peter Ridd's opinion that the Reef is NOT currently in danger or that the threat has been exaggerated?**

I have never met a single qualified reef scientist who accepts any of the climate or reef propaganda emanating from the Murdoch press or the IPA.

**4. What is the public to make of this disagreement?**

News Corp have a long history of climate change denial that is designed to confuse anyone silly enough to buy their newspapers. They like to

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misrepresent climate change as a “debate”, wheeling out the same so-called experts time after time.