

OCEAN DESTRUCTION

Approximately 70% of oxygen in the atmosphere is produced by marine plants, whilst the ocean absorbs 50 times more carbon dioxide than our atmosphere, making it a vitally important ally in the current climate crisis. Australia's marine environment is currently under threat due to a range of human-driven risk factors.

CORAL BLEACHING

Bleaching occurs when coral becomes stressed by changes in environmental conditions, like an increase in temperature, turning it completely white and lifeless. In total, only 2% of the Great Barrier Reef has been untouched by bleaching since 1998. When bleaching occurs, wildlife are forced to go in search of alternative food sources and a new viable habitat.

MARINE HEATWAVES

A marine heatwave is a short period of unusually high sea or ocean temperatures due to mounting greenhouse gas emissions. In February 2020, the sea surface temperatures on the Great Barrier Reef were the warmest they had been since records began in 1900. Marine heatwaves have also been identified as a major threat to oceanic biodiversity, causing habitat loss, disruptions to the food web, migration and mass mortality.

SHARK NETS AND DRUM LINES

Sharks are top-order predators in the ocean and prey upon weak and diseased animals, improving the ecosystem and helping to regulate the health of fish populations. Despite shark attacks being extremely rare, drumlines and shark nets are deployed off-shore with the aim of reducing their populations in both New South Wales and Queensland. A Senate inquiry has found that mesh nets and drumlines do not impact safety and negatively impact the marine ecosystem, recommending ceasing their use in favour of non-lethal methods and technologies.

FARMED FISH

Fish farms generate a large amount of waste, which spills out into the ocean, causing nitrogen pollution in the water and potentially severely stressing or killing wild fish populations. Most farmed fish species are carnivorous and rely upon wild-caught populations for feed, meaning wild fish must be caught to maintain growing farms.

WE MUST ACT NOW TO PROTECT OUR OCEANS

WILD CAUGHT FISHING

Commercial fishing reduces food sources for predatory sea creatures, causes habitat destruction and kills an estimated 20 million non-target species, known as “by-catch”, every year. According to the United Nations, 95% of worldwide ocean damage is directly linked to bottom trawling, a common practice where weighted nets drag along the ocean floor. If we continue to fish at our current rate, scientists predict we could face a 90% collapse of species abundance in just under 30 years.

THE SOLUTION:

To reduce coral bleaching and ocean heating we must combat the climate crisis – and we can through a just transition beyond fossil fuel mining and industrial animal agriculture. A carefully planned phase-out of industrialised fishing operations and harmful subsidies could not only see the broader marine environment and its inhabitants protected from ecological collapse, but also reduce the pressures on communities who rely heavily on coastal environments for their survival.

LEARN MORE,
TAKE ACTION:

