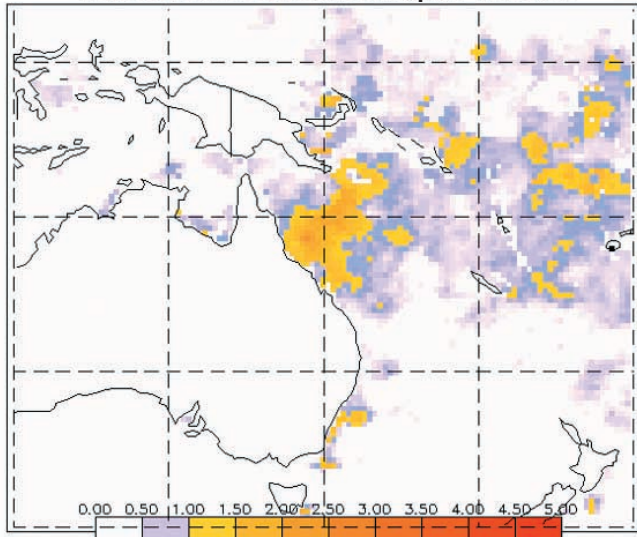


# REEF HEATWAVE

NOAA/NESDIS Current HotSpots 4/1/2002



Map courtesy of NOAA website [www.osdpd.noaa.gov](http://www.osdpd.noaa.gov)

Hot spots map produced by the US National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration highlighting areas off the coast where sea temperatures are above long-term average values

## Coral bleaching a threat to North jobs

By **BETTINA GIARDINA**

A LARGE-SCALE potential coral bleaching hot spot has been discovered over the Great Barrier Reef.

And high temperatures are to blame.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) says if current hot weather conditions continue, significant coral bleaching could occur.

GBRMPA research and monitoring project manager Dr Paul Marshall said yesterday it was not possible to confidently predict if current conditions would lead to a mass bleaching event.

Unusually warm water conditions could cause stress to corals, and have contributed to coral bleaching events in the past.

The local tourism industry is worried about the future of the reef, with a Townsville-based Tourism Queensland board member calling on governments to review their anti-pollution measures for the reef.

Tourism Queensland Townsville board member Lorna Hempstead said the Great Barrier Reef was responsible for thousands of jobs in North Queensland.

Ms Hempstead said a healthy reef was not only an irreplaceable

part of the world's ecosystem but an attraction that kept those tourism employees in jobs.

"The current warning signs highlight the need for governments, particularly the Federal Government, to take urgent steps to reduce potential threats to the reef," Ms Hempstead said.

"Global warming and water pollution play a part in this and we need to consider the ecological and economic consequences of not taking action now."

The coral bleaching hot spot was detected by two Townsville-based organisations – Australian Institute of Marine Science and GBRMPA – in collaboration with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Thermal satellite imaging from NOAA has identified the abnormally warm water extends along the Great Barrier Reef from Cairns to Rockhampton and northeast to the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea.

Coral bleaching expert Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg has already observed early signs of bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef.

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