

# Heatwave a major threat to the reef

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The worst bleaching event in the Great Barrier Reef's recorded history occurred in early 1998, when extensive coral mortality was reported in the inner half of the reef.

Mr Marshall said the hot and still weather conditions that had prevailed over Queensland during the past month had caused water temperatures to increase sooner and to higher levels than normally occurs in the reef.

Mr Marshall said daily sea temperatures were monitored by a network of weather stations managed by AIMS and GBRMPA.

He said recent data showed that average water temperatures at Cleveland Bay, Davies Reef, Myrmidon Reef and Agincourt Reef had already exceeded the average seasonal maximum, normally not reached until late January.

GBRMPA chairman Virginia Chadwick said GBRMPA had been liaising with reef users, and unfortunately there were early indicators that bleaching might be starting to happen in some areas.

"GBRMPA is closely monitoring conditions to determine if a major bleaching event will occur," Ms Chadwick said.