

Dr Peter Ridd Facebook Page Post

I've posted the coral cover data for a couple of regions of the reef over the last month, and finally AIMS has gone public with a statement released by environment minister Susan Ley associated with UNESCO's intention to list the reef as "endangered."

AIMS list the northern, central and southern regions as having 27%, 26% and 39% coral cover respectively. Normalising this for the number of reefs surveyed in each section (54, 53 and 30 reefs respectively), this produces a total average coral cover for the GBR of 28%. This is a record high value, although, given the uncertainties in these numbers one needs to be a little circumspect.

But it certainly does not indicate that there is much wrong with the Reef.

Disgustingly, the Queensland Environment Minister Meaghan Scanlon is claiming credit, reportedly saying in *The Australian* "... it's a sign of the work we've done to-date around water quality and research."

This has nothing to do with agriculture. No significant amounts of sediment, or pesticides reach the Reef, and there are 100's of times more nutrients cycling across the seabed, or coming in from the Pacific Ocean, than from farm fertilizer. The government could shut down every farm in Queensland, and it would have no impact, on the Reef.

The reason there is high coral cover is that the reef is in good shape because it is not affected by any significant pollution and the impact of climate change has been minimal.

The most important lesson from this is to accept that coral cover changes drastically from year to year. A bad cyclone can reduce it by half. A few good years, and it recovers. Don't make too much of the year-to-year fluctuations and don't let the media, or the scientists who egg them on, tell doom-stories when there is a reduction in coral.

But for goodness sake, tell everybody, especially the children – the Reef is fine. Don't get depressed; don't let them scare you with continuous doom and gloom.

Thanks again to the AIMS long term monitoring team for doing such good, quality assured, work over the last 35 years.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/.../6ad83500a5364d7f1696...>

<https://www.aims.gov.au/.../moni.../reef/latest-surveys.html>

