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MEDIA RELEASE

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Governments push coal as the Reef bleaches

On Tuesday the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority issued a Level 1 incident response to the widespread, as yet minor, coral bleaching event affecting the Reef and adverse weather forecasts. Meanwhile, both State and Federal governments are encouraging the growth of the coal industry.

Scientists worldwide have almost unanimously acknowledged that the burning of coal is the major contributor to climate change – which, according to GBRMPA, is the greatest threat to the Reef and the main cause of coral bleaching.

Almost a year ago, Prof. Terry Hughes, Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University told ABC Radio National that '... if Australia wants to save the Great Barrier Reef, it's an 'impossible task' to open up the massive coal reserves in the Galilee Basin'.

Yet, since then, both the Federal and the Queensland government have approved the opening of what would be the biggest mine in the Galilee Basin – and incidentally the biggest coal mine in the southern hemisphere, the size of the city of Paris to its outer limits.

What's more, they have both recently taken steps to grow the coal industry.

Despite signing on to the Paris agreement to limit carbon emissions, and keep 80% of the world's coal reserves in the ground, the Federal government has established the Oil, Gas and Energy Resources Growth Centre. The new Centre will work with the oil, gas, coal and uranium sectors – but does not consider or support the growth of Australia's renewable energy sector.

And at the State level, Minister for Natural Resources and Mines Dr Anthony Lynham announced on 17 February that he is considering subsidising the search for more coal.

Both governments, despite agreeing to help limit climate change, seem hell-bent on making things worse. Meanwhile, the Great Barrier Reef bleaches.

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