

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 83  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1.1  
**Programme:** Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)  
**Topic:** Crown-of-Thorns Starfish - Escalation concerns  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 04 November 2015  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator McLucas asked:**

1. Is the Department concerned about the escalation of Crown of Thorns starfish outbreaks?

**Answer:**

The scientific consensus is that crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks are one of the primary causes of lost coral cover over the last thirty years. The Commonwealth Department of the Environment therefore remains committed to supporting efforts to manage and mitigate outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish through five integrated initiatives:

- Direct management of crown-of-thorns starfish through culling starfish on specified high value tourist reefs to provide short term protection of coral cover and maintain the biodiversity of these reefs – managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.
- The Commonwealth Department of the Environment provides funding for research to inform improvements in crown-of-thorns starfish management.
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is building public awareness of the causes of crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and building industry capacity to manage crown-of-thorns starfish on a business-as-usual basis.
- As part of the Reef 2050 Plan, the Australian and Queensland Government are addressing poor water quality, a significant factor giving rise to crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks, through encouraging land managers to reduce sediment, nutrient and pesticide losses from their land.
- Managing fisheries and other marine harvesting industries.

This integrated approach is essential to provide short and long term management responses for this naturally occurring coral predator.