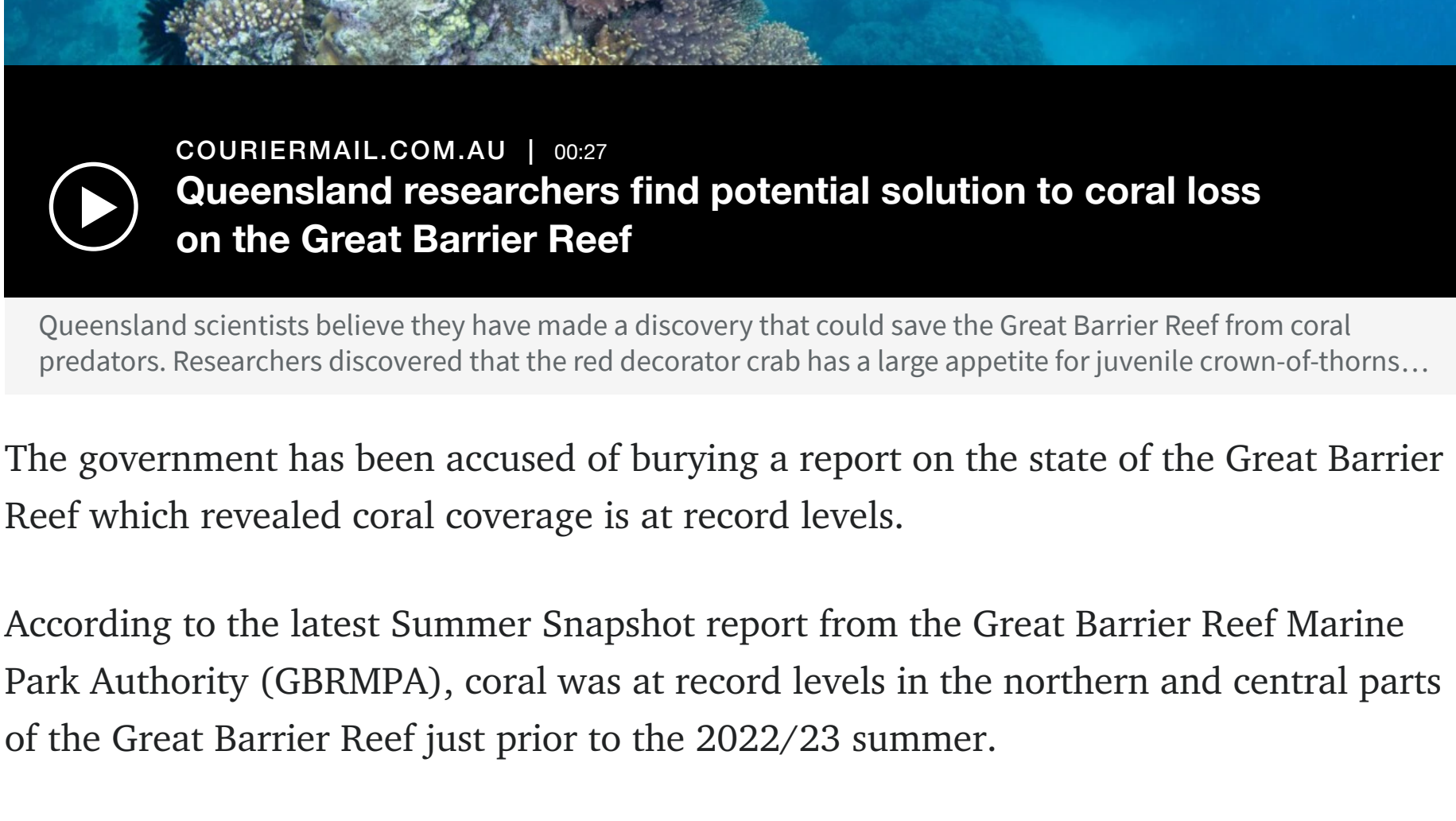


Great Barrier Reef health report: Government accused of burying good news

A new report on the health of the Great Barrier Reef has revealed good news. But hardly anybody has been told about it.

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@DavidMills1972 2 min read May 19, 2023 - 8:30AM
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Queensland scientists believe they have made a discovery that could save the Great Barrier Reef from coral predators. Researchers discovered that the red decorator crab has a large appetite for juvenile crown-of-thorns...

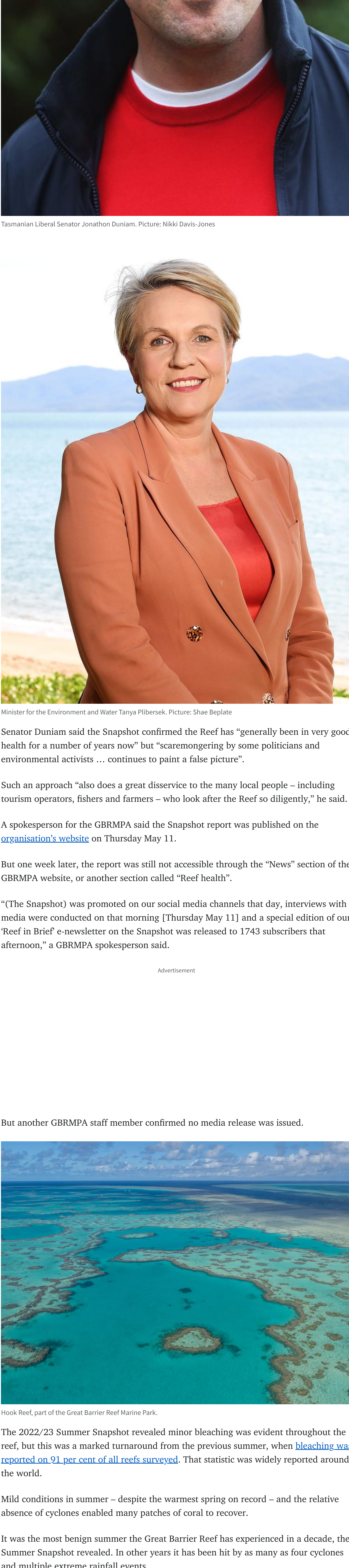
The government has been accused of burying a report on the state of the Great Barrier Reef which revealed coral coverage is at record levels.

According to the latest Summer Snapshot report from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), coral was at record levels in the northern and central parts of the Great Barrier Reef just prior to the 2022/23 summer.

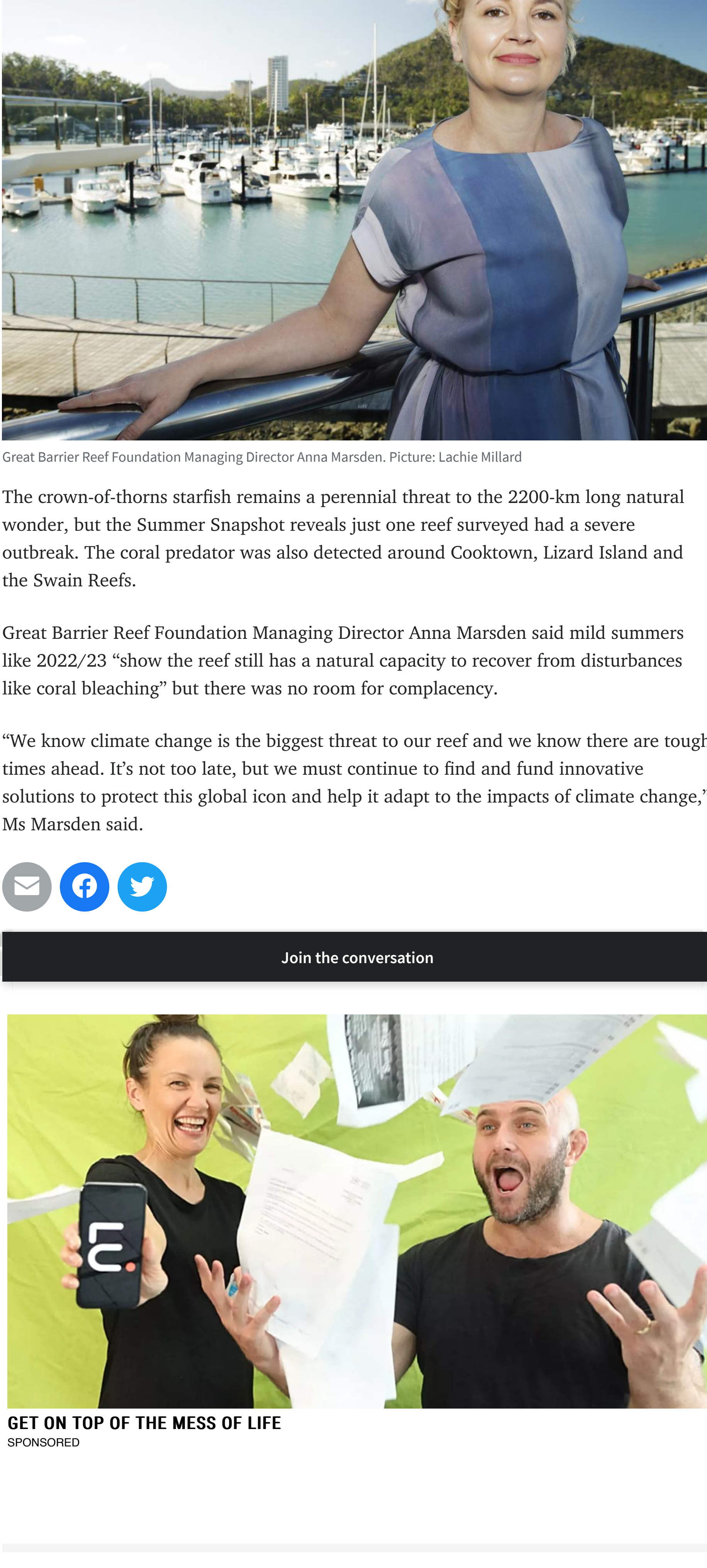
The Snapshot was quietly published online last week without a media release from GBRMPA, or commentary from Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek or the government's Special Envoy for the Reef, Senator Nita Green. Neither responded to requests for comment on Thursday afternoon.

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Opposition Environment spokesperson Senator Jonathon Duniham said it was "very disappointing" that Ms Plibersek "seems never to want to comment on reports that provide positive news about the condition and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef".



Tasmanian Liberal Senator Jonathon Duniham. Picture: Nikki Davis-Jones



Minister for the Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek. Picture: Shae Beplate

Senator Duniham said the Snapshot confirmed the Reef has "generally been in very good health for a number of years now" but "scaremongering by some politicians and environmental activists ... continues to paint a false picture".

Such an approach "also does a great disservice to the many local people – including tourism operators, fishers and farmers – who look after the Reef so diligently," he said.

A spokesperson for the GBRMPA said the Snapshot report was published on the [organisation's website](#) on Thursday May 11.

But one week later, the report was still not accessible through the "News" section of the GBRMPA website, or another section called "Reef health".

"(The Snapshot) was promoted on our social media channels that day, interviews with media were conducted on that morning [Thursday May 11] and a special edition of our 'Reef in Brief' e-newsletter on the Snapshot was released to 1743 subscribers that afternoon," a GBRMPA spokesperson said.

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But another GBRMPA staff member confirmed no media release was issued.

Hook Reef, part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The 2022/23 Summer Snapshot revealed minor bleaching was evident throughout the reef, but this was a marked turnaround from the previous summer, when [bleaching was reported on 91 per cent of all reefs surveyed](#). That statistic was widely reported around the world.

Mild conditions in summer – despite the warmest spring on record – and the relative absence of cyclones enabled many patches of coral to recover.

It was the most benign summer the Great Barrier Reef has experienced in a decade, the Summer Snapshot revealed. In other years it has been hit by as many as four cyclones and multiple extreme rainfall events.

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden. Picture: Lachie Millard

The crown-of-thorns starfish remains a perennial threat to the 2200-km long natural wonder, but the Summer Snapshot reveals just one reef surveyed had a severe outbreak. The coral predator was also detected around Cooktown, Lizard Island and the Swain Reefs.

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden said mild summers like 2022/23 "show the reef still has a natural capacity to recover from disturbances like coral bleaching" but there was no room for complacency.

"We know climate change is the biggest threat to our reef and we know there are tough times ahead. It's not too late, but we must continue to find and fund innovative solutions to protect this global icon and help it adapt to the impacts of climate change," Ms Marsden said.

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