

# ALGAE ALERTS FOR THE BARWON-DARLING RIVER SYSTEM.



## Far West Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

### 21<sup>st</sup> November 2008

This blue-green algal alert report is based on routine monitoring undertaken by Walgett Shire Council, Bourke Shire Council, Central Darling Shire Council, Brewarrina Shire Council and the Department of Water and Energy

These alert levels apply for **non consumptive or recreational contact**. Drinking water safety thresholds are much more stringent

Date / Alert	LOCATION	Current Count: total BGA C/ml / BVEq mm <sup>3</sup> /L	Previous Alert Level	Dominant Species
05/11/08 No Alert	Barwon River @ Collarenebri	990 C/mL <<0.04 mm <sup>3</sup> /L BVEq	Nil	<i>Aphanathece sp.</i>
05/11/08 No Alert	Barwon River @ Walgett Dangar Bridge	286 C/mL <<0.04 mm <sup>3</sup> /L BVEq	Nil	<i>Chroococcus sp.</i>
05/11/08 No Alert	Namoi River @ Walgett	1,277 C/mL 0.02 mm <sup>3</sup> /L BVEq	Amber	<i>Limnothrix sp.</i>
15/10/08 No Alert	Barwon River @ Brewarrina	None detected		..
30/09/08 No Alert	Darling River @ Bourke/ Boat Ramp	None detected	No Alert	.
30/09/08 GREEN	Darling River @ 'Rose Isle'	397 C/mL 0.06 mm <sup>3</sup> /L BVEq	No Alert	Cylindrospermum sp
30/09/08 No Alert	Darling River @ Louth	None detected	No Alert	
27/05/08 No Alert	Darling River @ Tilpa & Weir Pool	None detected	No Alert	
27/05/08 No Alert	Darling River @ 'Trevallyn' 70km d/s of Tilpa	None detected	No Alert	
27/05/08 No Alert	Darling River @ 'Atley'	None detected	No Alert	
13/10/08 No Alert	Darling River @ Wilcannia	None detected	No Alert	
27/05/08 No Alert	Darling River @ 'Culpaulin'	71 C/mL	No Alert	Phormidium sp.

# The total observed cyanobacteria genera that contribute to the current alert level are presented in conjunction with a bio-volume equivalent to *Microcystis aeruginosa* calculated for all contributing cyanobacteria species. These data are presented for information only. We recommend that water treatment and stock management responses should not be altered according to the observed cyanobacteria genera. All Cyanobacteria should be considered as potentially harmful to human and animal health when present in blooms.

River users and landholders are advised to avoid waters in areas subject to RED (High) alert levels or with visible algae scums. They should also consider either alternative sources of water for stock. NSW Health advises that any domestic

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**1800 999 457 Toll free**

use of surface water without treatment is dangerous and should be avoided. Note, boiling water contaminated with blue green algae **does not** remove toxins

Alert Definitions as specified in The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water* 2005

The interim use of these guidelines is endorsed by the Scientific Subcommittee of the NSW Algal Advisory Group

Key to alerts for recreational waters

Blue-Green Algal Level	Alert Definition
<p><b>GREEN</b> <b>(Low Alert)</b> &gt; 500 to &lt; 5000 cells/mL <i>M. aeruginosa</i> OR biovolume equivalent of &gt; 0.04 to &lt; 0.4 mm<sup>3</sup>/L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low levels of potentially toxic species detected – suggesting base crop of blue green algae may be on the increase</b></li> </ul> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continue/increase routine sampling to measure cyanobacterial levels</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>AMBER</b> <b>(Medium) Alert</b> ≥5000 to &lt;50 000 cells/mL <i>M. aeruginosa</i> OR biovolume equivalent of ≥ 0.4 to &lt; 4 mm<sup>3</sup>/L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Indicates blue-green algae are multiplying</b></li> <li>• <b>Water may have a green tinge and musty taste and odour</b></li> </ul> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Water supply authorities to commence filtering with activated carbon</b></li> </ul> <p>Investigations into the causes of the elevated levels and increased sampling to enable the risks to recreational users to be more accurately assessed.</p>
<p><b>RED</b> <b>(High) Alert</b> ≥ 50 000 cells/mL toxic <i>M. aeruginosa</i> ORr biovolume equivalent of ≥4 mm<sup>3</sup>/L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria where a known toxin producer is dominant OR The total biovolume of all cyanobacteria exceeds 10 mm<sup>3</sup>/L OR Cyanobacterial blooms are consistently present</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High levels of potentially toxic species detected</b></li> <li>• <b>Indicates “bloom” conditions</b></li> <li>• <b>Toxicity should be presumed</b></li> <li>• <b>Water will appear green or brownish and may have a strong musty taste and odour</b></li> <li>• <b>Surface scums could occur</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Extreme care should be exercised, and contact with the water should be avoided</b></p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Issue Media Release</b></li> <li>• <b>Water supply authorities to increase filtering with activated carbon as appropriate</b></li> </ul> <p>Local authority and health authorities to warn the public that the water body is considered to be unsuitable for primary contact recreation</p>

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