



CHIEF MINISTER'S WEEKLY ISSUES BRIEF

DATE: 16 May 2019

ACT HEALTH DIRECTORATE

Area: Public Health, Protection and Regulation

Title: Blue/Green Algae – Lake Tuggeranong

- Drought conditions, high summer temperatures and high nutrient levels in Lake Tuggeranong over summer and early autumn led to significant blooms of blue-green algae (BGA), resulting in closure of the lake for primary-contact recreation from December 2018 until early May 2019.
- Lake Tuggeranong currently has elevated levels of (BGA). This is resulting in concern within the local community of potential public risk.
- Lake Tuggeranong College has sought advice in relation to risk of inhalation due to notable odour within the buildings.
- Guidelines relating to the risk of (BGA) are limited to primary contact. No guidelines are available related to inhalation of airborne particles. The ACT Government Analytical Laboratory does not have the capability to test for airborne (BGA) particles, but will continue to support Health Protection Services actions in relation to this issue within its capability.
- There has been mounting community concern about the potential health effects and unpleasant odour arising from the BGA bloom in Lake Tuggeranong, particularly amongst staff, students and parents at Lake Tuggeranong College.
- On the 7 of May 2019, the Acting Chief Health Officer and representatives from the EPSDD attended a Tuggeranong Community Council Meeting. The EPSDD presented an update on the progress of the ACT Healthy Waterways projects relevant to the Lake Tuggeranong water-catchment area and the Acting Chief Health Officer responded to questions about the potential health impacts of BGA. Information that was provided about the potential health impacts of BGA was well received.
- On the 7 May 2019, a fact-sheet about the health effects of BGA was published on the ACT Health website:

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-05/Blue%20Green%20Algae%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

SENSITIVE

Title: Winter flu season (influenza vaccination)

- Distribution of the funded influenza vaccine to immunisation providers in the ACT commenced on 8 April 2019.
- To 13 May 2019 75,560 doses have been distributed. This is higher than the record 70,677 doses distributed in the same period in 2018.
- In 2019 a pilot program of administering National Immunisation Program influenza vaccine to persons 65 years and over through pharmacies is being conducted. Forty five pharmacies have elected to be a part of the program. An evaluation of this pilot will be conducted in late 2019.
- The significant increase in the number of immunisation providers in the ACT that are administering National Immunisation Program funded vaccine has caused increases in workloads and delays in urgent deliveries.
- Due to the finite number of influenza vaccines available for persons 65 years and over being spread across more immunisation providers, rationing of doses and redistribution of this vaccine has commenced slightly earlier this year compared to previous years.
- There are no current issues with influenza vaccine supply in the ACT, however the high demand for influenza vaccination is causing some delays in the ability of ACT Health to replenish government funded vaccine stocks to GPs, pharmacies and other immunisation providers in the ACT.
- The distribution of influenza vaccine for children six months to five years is significantly lower in 2019 compared to 2018. Communications and Government Relations in liaison with the Health Protection Service are currently developing targeted messaging to parents of children in this age group.
- Each year the flu season varies in severity and the circulating strains, so the best way to keep those numbers down as the influenza season approaches is by getting this year's flu vaccine.
- All Canberrans over six months of age are strongly encouraged to get the flu shot.
- Young children, the elderly, pregnant women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with certain chronic medical conditions are eligible for a free government-funded vaccine.
- Current flu activity remains low in the ACT. The ACT Health Directorate is closely monitoring influenza activity as we move into the expected influenza season for 2019.

The content has been cleared by

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