



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Ms Meegan Fitzharris MLA (Chair), Mr Alistair Coe MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Chris Bourke MLA, Mr Andrew Wall MLA

**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Asked by MR WALL on 13 November 2015: **MR GARY RAKE** took on notice the following question(s):

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In relation to: Lake Tuggeranong Closure

MR WALL: Okay. My understanding is Lake Tuggeranong has been closed for the last little while, but not due to blue-green algae. What is the cause of the closure at the moment?

Ms Ekelund: It is another algae. The Environment Protection Agency is generally the agency that looks after this in detail, but our ecologist could probably describe the particular pollutant in more detail if you need that.

MR WALL: That is all right, even if they just want to take it on notice if it is outside of the area.

Mr Rake: I am happy to take it on notice. I do believe it is a different strain of blue-green algae. There are three prominent strains here in Canberra.

MINISTER CORBELL: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Lake Tuggeranong was closed from 17 September 2015 to 11 November 2015 for secondary contact (swimming) in accordance with the ACT Health Guidelines for Recreational Water Quality due to the present of the blue-green algae, *Tychonema*.

Tychonema is a cold weather blue green algae normally present in ACT Lakes during winter and early spring.

This particular algae is generally benthic, which means that it prefers to grow whilst attached to a substrate, such as rocks, sand, concrete, and possibly ribbon weed. During the process of photosynthesis, oxygen bubbles become trapped in the benthic mats, which then lift off the bottom and float to the surface. Once the algae floats on the surface, it then dies. We notice this form of the algae by the presence of these floating clumps.

Wind and wave action concentrate these clumps along a shoreline. As the algal cells decay, they will release toxins. Animals, particularly dogs, are attracted to the algal clumps along the shoreline which could be ingested by the dogs.

The low rainfall experienced during August and early September resulted in clear water conditions in Lake Tuggeranong facilitating growth of this benthic algae.

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The blue green algae blooms typically seen during the warmer summer months are associated with the blue green algae *Anabaena* and *Microcystis*.

Weekly monitoring of visible algal conditions is performed by the EPA and Health Protection Service officers all year.

Actions on alerts, warnings or lake closures are determined when certain levels of blue-green algae are present. The full procedures are available from the ACT Health Guidelines for Recreational Water Quality <http://health.act.gov.au/health-services/population-health/health-protection-service/recreational-water-quality/act-guidelines-for-recreational-water-quality>

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services

Signature:

Date:

18/12/15

By the Minister for the Environment, Simon Corbell, MLA