

Dot Point Request

Requested by: Minister's Office

Business Unit: Place Management

Subject: Orr – Yerrabi Pond, Mowing and Algae

Dot Points:

EPA response:

- Yerrabi pond is part of the ACT Government water monitoring program and the data is reported here www.environment.act.gov.au/water/water_quality/act_water_reports
- Generally, Yerrabi has had improving water quality over the years since it was built as the focus of housing construction is further away and newer ponds upstream intercept sediment. The improvement in water clarity has enabled the water plants to flourish compared to many years ago.
- Currently the waterbody has a mix of water plants, attached submerged macrophytes (ribbon weed) and a variety of algae (chlorophytes & cyanobacteria) that are free floating and attached to substrates (rocks, mud and ribbon weed). This situation is considered healthy in terms of ecosystem function and would be expected to support a variety of other organisms (fish, birds, reptiles & insects).
- Algae are an important part of aquatic life and are part of the diverse community know as 'phytoplankton', which is a myriad of single celled or colonial floating photosynthetic organisms. They perform two vital roles in aquatic systems — they mop up free/excess nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorous, they release large quantities of oxygen into the water column and provide a food source for aquatic insects, shrimps, tadpoles and birds. In closed systems such as lakes and artificial wetlands, the significant phytoplankton population rises and falls in seasonal (sunlight & temperature) pulses and as a response to nutrient levels.
- In past decades (1970s) the Government removed ribbon weed from lakes and ponds because it looked unsightly and was considered unhealthy. It turned out to cause other long term problems with water quality. Currently there is no action to undertake direct removal of algae from lakes and ponds.
- Further information about Canberra's urban lakes and ponds, permitted uses and risks, is available from the following ACT Government websites.

www.tccs.act.gov.au/city-living/recreation/waterways/water_quality_in_our_lakes_and_ponds

health.act.gov.au/public-information/public-health/recreational-water-quality

www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/627



- Increase in insects around the area and across Canberra more broadly may be due to the warming season.
- The current litter removal program sees all lakes and ponds being cleaned a minimum of four times a year with priority water bodies targeted weekly. Yerrabi Pond's litter is cleaned weekly (not including organic material such as ribbon weed), weather permitting. In addition to cleaning, the control and removal of woody weeds occurs annually.
- City Services undertakes three main types of mowing across Canberra with varying frequency: arterial road mowing, suburb mowing and fire hazard reduction mowing. City Services aims to mow grass along arterial and connecting roadways every five weeks during the peak growing season. Suburban parks and public open spaces are generally mown every four weeks during peak growing periods and every two to three months at other times of the year. Irrigated parks and sportsgrounds are mown more frequently in keeping with their function. Fire fuel hazard reduction and conservation mowing is undertaken in accordance with standards set in relevant plans.
- Mowing to ensure public safety, such as line of sight, access, and fire fuel reduction remains a priority when delivering mowing programs and takes precedence over amenity mowing.
- Mowing along grassed areas around Anthony Rolfe Avenue and Gundaroo Drive was conducted on the week of 1 November 2021.
- Mowing of locations in the area with line of sight issues was completed on 9 November 2021.
- While many aspects of nature strips maintenance are the responsibility of the ACT Government, it is an accepted practice that maintenance of nature strips (residential or commercial), with an exception of street trees, is carried out by the adjacent lessee (this includes single unit dwellings, body corporates, schools and ACT Housing properties).
- A letter drop around the area to remind the residents/lease holders of the maintenance expectation of their residential nature strips was conducted on the week of 1 November 2021.

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Executive Branch Manager: Stephen Alegria

Date: 11/11/21