

Media Release

Friday 18 March 2022 | Media contact: Pip Younes | 0409 872 494

Blue-green algae detected in the Barwon River and Lake Connearre

High levels of toxic blue-green algae have been detected in Lake Connearre and the lower reaches of the Barwon River near Barwon Heads.

Warning signs have been installed at various locations and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is urging people to avoid direct contact with the water until the algal bloom disperses.

Direct contact with blue-green algae can cause allergic reactions such as skin rashes or irritations. If swallowed, it can cause gastroenteritis, nausea or vomiting.

Recreational activities in the river should be avoided, which includes swimming and boating.

Anyone who comes into contact with water from the lake or river should immediately wash in fresh water and seek medical advice if they experience any illness.

Any fish harvested from the river and lake must have the gills and guts removed prior to cooking. People should not eat whole fish, or shellfish or crustaceans collected from Lake Connearre or the Barwon River.

The type of algae affecting Lake Connearre and the Barwon River produces toxins that can concentrate in shellfish and crustaceans and accumulate in the liver and internal organs of fish. Ingesting BGA toxins can lead to serious illness.

Pet owners should prevent pets from drinking or having direct contact with contaminated water.

DELWP and its local water managers Barwon Coast Committee of Management and Parks Victoria will continue monitoring the Barwon River near Barwon Heads and Lake Connearre until the bloom disperses and advise when the river and lake is safe for use again.

Please contact DELWP on 136 186 to report any potential algal bloom.

More information about blue-green algae can be found here: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/water/health-effects-of-blue-green-algae>

Quotes attributable to DELWP Barwon South West Regional Agency Commander Steve Pellicano:

"The level of blue-green algae toxicity that's been detected in the Barwon River and Lake Connearre can cause harm to humans and animals."

"We're urging the community to follow all warning advice and signage for their safety."

"We will continue monitoring the Barwon River and Lake Connearre until the algal bloom disperses, and will provide an update to the community when the lake is safe for use again."