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STATE READY TO COMBAT ALGAE OUTBREAKS

Acting Government Enterprises Minister Michael Atkinson says the Government is ready to deal with an expected increase in algal blooms in rivers and reservoirs as the drought continues and temperatures climb.

Mr Atkinson says S.A. Water has been on the front foot, preparing for a range of scenarios with leading scientists who are working on strategies to deal with the blooms.

“We already have an extensive monitoring programme for cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) in all of our water supplies but, because of the drought, S.A. Water has also been planning to deal with an increase in outbreaks,” Mr Atkinson says.

“As soon as it became apparent that spring flows into the River Murray were going to be very low, S.A. Water began modelling scenarios and assessing risk.

“Scientists from the Australian Water Quality Centre and operational staff have been developing solutions to ensure public health is maintained if there is a sustained outbreak of algal blooms.

“Among the new measures is extra temperature monitoring in the River Murray, with additional testing stations being installed to give scientists an early warning of potential outbreaks.

“The Government also recently announced the next stage of a \$50 million program to deliver filtered water to rural communities. Filtered water will be supplied to 17 communities by building separate water treatment plants or connecting existing plants to cater for each community. The Country Water Quality Improvement Program will deliver higher quality treated drinking water. This will also assist in eliminating algae from the water supply,” Mr Atkinson says.

Other measures include:

- Preparing possible modifications to water treatment plants so they continuously treat high levels of algae in the source water.
- Acceleration of plans to provide for permanent carbon dosing (this will remove dissolved toxins if present) where temporary measures are now used.
- Storing algal-scum booms for quick dispatch around pumping stations.
- Increased routine algal monitoring

- If higher numbers of cyanobacteria are detected plans, we have plans to survey from the air with advanced digital cameras and video equipment to determine any spread of algal blooms.

“For the past 15 years S.A. Water has been working with both Australian and international partners and has been conducting cutting-edge research on the management of blue-green algal blooms, including studying advanced testing and detection techniques, assessment of toxicity, removal by water treatment and control techniques in reservoirs and rivers,” Mr Atkinson said.

“S.A. Water’s Australian Water Quality Centre is internationally recognised as a centre of expertise for this work and we believe we have all the planning, people and equipment to protect public health.”