



MEDIA RELEASE

Date: January 14, 2008

For immediate release

LAKE WYANGAN CLOSED TO ALL USERS

Unusually high levels of toxic Blue Green Algae have forced the immediate closure of Lake Wyangan (North) to all users.

The closure, which has been implemented by Griffith City Council, means there can be no access or use of water coming directly out of the north lake until the levels have reduced.

Council's Environment and Health Department has been monitoring the lake's water quality and has decided to enact the Murrumbidgee Regional Algal Committee Contingency Plan.

The Contingency Plan guarantees appropriate measures are in place, and has been developed with the Department of Water and Energy, the NSW Health Department and key stakeholders in the Murrumbidgee Regional Algae Co-ordinating Committee, including Griffith City Council and Murrumbidgee Irrigation.

The plan allows for the closure of the waterway affected and ensures notification of all water users.

Griffith City Council General Manager, Peter Brooks, said the closure was more of a precautionary measure, due to the extremely low level of the lake and continuing warm dry weather.

"It appears the level the north lake is currently at is conducive to an increase in the growth of the algal bloom and has contributed to a higher than normal reading of toxic components of the bloom," Mr Brooks said.

"It's in the best interests of the community that we close the lake now, to ensure there are no immediate health hazards to people who would normally participate in water sports."

Regular users, such as the boat club and the sailing club, will be formally notified of the closure and all use of the water, including swimming, bathing, yabbying, fishing and any form of direct contact is prohibited.

Landholders and pet owners are being warned to ensure their stock and animals are prevented from drinking the water.

While the recreational land, such as picnic areas, will remain open, Council has discontinued watering the grasslands, as spray from the water used to irrigate the area could contain toxic elements.

However, by working with Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Council has ensured that water used in toilets, for hand washing and to water the animals in the parkland area will not be affected.

This water is not suitable and has never been suitable for drinking and will be monitored for algal levels weekly.

“There were two triggers we were monitoring – the actual level of the Lake, as implemented by NSW Maritime and the quality of the water,” Mr Brooks said.

“We have now reached the trigger point for the quality of the water, are notifying the relevant authorities and the water users.”

Warning signs are currently being erected at Lake Wyangan to alert users of the closure of the waterway, and brochures and information will be provided to visitors through the Griffith Visitors Centre.

*** end ***

Media Information:

Alison Balind
Media and Communications Co-ordinator
Griffith City Council
(02) 6969 4827
0419 219 984