

MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister welcomes end to red alerts for
blue green algae in Murray**

Friday 15 March 2009

NSW Water Minister, Phil Costa has welcomed news that all red alerts for blue green algae along the Murray River have been lifted.

He said the red alert at Euston and Robinvale was downgraded yesterday following test results that showed a decline in the numbers of toxic blue green algae.

“This marks the end of the worst blue green algae bloom ever recorded in the Murray River,” said Mr Costa.

“At the peak of the bloom, over 800 kilometres of river was affected.

“I would like to commend the Murray and Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committees for the professional manner in which they responded.

“The Committees worked quickly to implement the proper processes so that local communities and visitors to affected areas were well informed,” he said.

Mr Costa said the use of portable monitoring equipment known as “fluorometers” appeared to have improved the response time for detecting and assessing blooms.

“The record bloom coincided with a NSW Government trial of fluorometers in 28 sites along Murray and Lower Darling Rivers,” he said.

“This monitoring equipment can measure blue green algae pigment fluorescence as well as water temperature, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, pH, turbidity and depth, which provide a better understanding of algal growth.

“The technology provides a preliminary reading while standing on the riverbank meaning samples can be prioritised for testing in the laboratory.

“The results of the trial to date are encouraging and it’s my hope that the final assessment will show fluorometers to be a reliable early warning tool,” he said.

“The NSW Government is committed to protecting NSW waterways for the safety and welfare of all communities and this trial is yet another innovative solution to a long standing problem,” Mr Costa said.

More information regarding blue-green algae and Regional Algal Coordinating Committees is available online at www.dwe.nsw.gov.au.

ENDS

Contact Peter McCabe 0439 707 101