

**Estimates Committee 2003**  
**Questions Taken On Notice**

( 01/10/2002 to 01/10/2004 )

Date: 06/27/2003

Output:

Sub Output:

Subject: Outbreaks of blue green algae

**From:** Mr KIELY to Dr Christopher BURNS  
Minister for the Environment and Heritage

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**Question:** **9-1**  
The southern and eastern states have reported at times outbreaks of blue green algae. The question that I put to you, Minister, is: do we have any rivers at risk in the north and, if so, do we have protocols in place to manage such an outbreak?



Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory  
**Estimates Committee 2003**

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**Registration No.:** 9.1  
**Responsible Minister:** Minister for the Environment and Heritage  
**Responsible Agency:** Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment

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**WRITTEN QUESTION**

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**FROM:** *Mr Len Keily MLA* **Tel.:**  
*Member for Sanderson*  
**TO:** *Minister responsible for Environment and Heritage (Burns)*

**Question**

The southern and eastern States have reported at times outbreaks of blue-green algae. The question I put to you, Minister, is “Do we have any rivers at risk in the north and, if so, do we have protocols in place to manage such an outbreak?”

**ANSWER**

*[Office of Environment and Heritage]*

The rivers in the Top End of the Territory are at very low risk of blue-green algal blooms.

The environmental conditions that have produced blue-green algal blooms in the southern and eastern States of Australia do not occur here, in particular changes to river flow patterns associated with dams and irrigation and increased nutrients in rivers from wastewater and agriculture.

None of the Top End dams significantly alter flows on an annual basis, as they spill over during the wet season. Further, nutrient levels in Top End rivers are low in nutrients.

If an outbreak of blue-green algae were to occur, which is highly unlikely, then protocols developed for other parts of Australia would be implemented and would focus on the protection of public health and livestock, e.g.

- Initial testing for toxicity to assess the risk to public health and livestock;
- If these risks are unacceptable, closing access to the public and restricting access by stock until the problem is resolved; and
- If the body of water were small enough, dosing with copper sulfate or other algicide.