Blue-Green Algae: Frequently Asked Questions

What are Blue Green Algae?

Cyanobacteria (Blue Green Algae) are a photosynthetic, single-celled bacteria that live in all aquatic environments. They are a natural part of a healthy ecosystem and only cause issues when they bloom.

What causes an algal bloom?

Algal blooms occur when there is a combination of suitable environmental conditions including:

- A high nutrient load e.g., nitrogen and phosphorus
- High levels of sunlight
- Warm water temperatures
- Stable water conditions e.g., low flows, minimal turbulence.

Under favourable conditions they can proliferate rapidly and form a "bloom". Townsville experiences all these favourable conditions in the summer months.

How can algal blooms affect our community?

Cyanobacteria blooms can affect water quality by releasing taste and odour compounds, and toxins, and causing water discolouration. They can affect water production by reducing filter run-time at the water treatment plants.

When blooms occur Townsville City Council extensively tests water quality and works closely with Queensland Public Health and the Water Supply Regulator to ensure all water meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

Managing Blue Green algal blooms

Managing blooms can be challenging. TCC assess each bloom scenario to identify appropriate treatment responses. The preferred approach is to improve resilience by strengthening environmental health.

Additional treatment barriers have been installed at Douglas Water Treatment Plant, including pre-chlorination, PAC dosing and clarifiers.

We will continue to keep the community informed through Council's website and social media accounts.

For further information: 13 48 10 enquiries@townsville.qld.gov.au townsville.qld.gov.au