



## **Senate Environment and Communications References Committee**

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**18 August 2025**

### **Submission: Inquiry into Algal Blooms in South Australia**

To the Committee Secretary,

On behalf of the Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance (KITA), we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Inquiry into algal blooms in South Australian marine and coastal environments.

KITA is the peak industry body for the tourism, food, wine and beverage sectors on Kangaroo Island. We represent over 120 member businesses and operate as the official Regional Tourism Organisation for our region. The visitor economy is vital to our island, contributing \$197 million annually and supporting one in three local jobs.

Our submission addresses several key terms of reference, particularly the ecological, economic, cultural and social impacts of algal blooms and the adequacy of response and recovery strategies.

#### **Impact on Tourism and the Regional Economy**

Kangaroo Island is internationally renowned for its unspoilt natural environment, abundant wildlife and premium produce. The emergence of algal blooms, particularly in sensitive marine park sanctuary zones in areas such as Nepean Bay and Pelican Lagoon, and across our northern coastline threatens the very essence of our tourism offering. Visitors are drawn to our pristine coastlines, clean waters and safe swimming and fishing environments. Algal blooms compromise visitor safety, reduce visual appeal, and directly impact tourism experiences such as marine tours and fishing, and more widely the flow on visitor spend within island.

Operators in both the tourism and aquaculture sectors have reported booking cancellations, reduced bookings or inability to manage oyster farms leading to no product harvesting, and reputational damage that extends beyond immediate environmental recovery.

#### **Concerns Regarding Coordination and Communication**

There has been considerable concern from the Island community since the bloom first occurred in April 2025 regarding the causes, health implications and duration of algal blooms. Our members express concern that these issues were not seriously addressed until the HAB reached the Adelaide beaches and that there has been limited and delayed information flow from responsible authorities.

A clearer and coordinated approach regarding current management and future recovery involving local industries and communities is urgently required. This includes real-time updates, coordinated risk messaging, and transparent scientific investigation that also includes the local



industry. In recent weeks we have seen an increase in the flow of information and presence by authorities in our area and we trust that this continues and increases.

### **Support for Impacted Businesses and Long-Term Resilience**

At present, there are financial or resilience support measures targeted at affected tourism businesses. Information provided by our members suggest that the current financial support packages offered by the State Government don't address the nature in which tourism business operates, and as such many are ineligible. Those that have been successful are using those funds to pay mounting expenses to keep their business afloat.

There is presently very little support being offered to those businesses who are directly affected to assist them to diversify their business model. Without support these businesses will likely disappear.

The recent algal blooms have occurred on the back of multiple crises on Kangaroo Island, including the 2019/20 bushfires, ongoing recovery from COVID-19 disruptions, and most recently drought. Many businesses are operating on narrow margins and cannot absorb the costs of environmental disruptions without support.

### **Social and Community Impacts**

The social impacts of repeated environmental challenges, including drought and now marine algal blooms, are deeply felt across our community. Recreational and subsistence fishing is a longstanding cultural and social practice for many residents, particularly in small coastal communities. The loss of access to fishing grounds and beaches due to health advisories has removed a vital activity for food security, mental wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Mental health concerns have escalated, particularly among those already affected by economic hardship, isolation, and cumulative disaster fatigue. There is a pressing need for more readily accessible, tailored mental health and resilience services on the Island. In particular, we recommend improved coordination and resourcing for regional health outreach and community-led wellbeing initiatives, as well as funding mechanisms that support preventative social health responses during environmental crises.

We respectfully recommend:

- Enhanced funding for environmental monitoring where water testing can be undertaken more regionally, and early-warning systems developed
- Further research into contributing factors, particularly relating to nutrient run-off, warming ocean temperatures, and sediment disturbance
- Establishment of a contingency fund to support businesses during environmental events, and supporting business to get back on their feet
- Development of coordinated communication protocols between environmental authorities and regional industry bodies



- Improved access to and funding for mental health and social wellbeing services in regional and remote areas

We are committed to continuing to work with our local State Government authorities on these matters and encourage the Federal Government to play its part in supporting our members.

The sustainability of our marine ecosystems is intrinsically linked to the economic and social wellbeing of our community. We urge the committee to ensure that future policies and funding mechanisms adequately address the interconnectedness of environmental health and regional economic sustainability.

We thank the Committee for considering this submission and welcome the opportunity to provide further information or participate in any hearings or consultations relevant to our region.

Yours sincerely,

**Wendy Campana**

Chair

Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance

[www.tourkangarooisland.com.au](http://www.tourkangarooisland.com.au)