



# **Australian Government**

Australian Government response to the  
Senate Environment and Communications References Committee report:

Algal blooms in South Australia

MARCH 2026

## Introduction

On 23 July 2025, the Senate referred an inquiry into 'Algal blooms in South Australia' to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report.

On 11 November 2025, the committee released its report and made 14 recommendations. The Australian Government welcomes the report, the 14 Committee recommendations, and the additional minority recommendations, that will improve our ability to understand, prepare, and respond to similar events in the future.

The Australian Government acknowledges the significant impacts the harmful algal bloom has caused across the marine environment, businesses, and local communities in South Australia over the last year. The Australian Government notes that at the point of tabling the response to the inquiry the algal bloom in South Australia is still active, and that recovery will take time.

The harmful algal bloom is an unprecedented event that has required a flexible and innovative policy response. The Australian Government has worked hand in hand with the South Australian Government to provide financial and on ground support to affected South Australian businesses and communities, while investing in the resilience of the marine environment.

The Australian Government has contributed \$68.7 million to the response effort. With South Australia's contributions, over \$165 million is being invested, including \$102.5 million for the Algal Bloom Summer Plan. The Australian Government has also responded to this event through direct investment in tools to improve our ability to forecast and monitor ocean conditions, actions to protect marine species, and by establishing a new industry support mechanism through the Regional Investment Corporation.

The National Climate Risk Assessment identifies that marine heatwaves will increase in frequency and duration in the future, with a range of consequences to the marine environment, including potentially, future harmful algal blooms. Work to understand the algal bloom and prepare for future events nationally is important. There will be important learnings from this event, including how we best prepare, collaborate and respond to future events. This work, along with the National Adaptation Plan, is critical in supporting our preparedness for climate change induced threats to our ocean.

**Recommendation 1**

The committee recommends the Australian Government show leadership by developing a fit for purpose framework for research, monitoring and responses to climate induced, slow-onset and significant ecological events such as harmful algal blooms.

**Response**

Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The harmful algal bloom is an unprecedented event that has required a flexible and innovative policy response. The Australian Government has worked hand in hand with the South Australian Government to provide financial and on ground support to affected South Australian businesses and communities, while investing in the resilience of the marine environment.

The Australian Government supports national approaches to ocean management across jurisdictions, including for the environment, through meetings of Environment Ministers', and on fisheries, marine park and threatened species management. The framework deployed to respond to the algal bloom has activated many Australian Government departments and agencies, noting their responsibilities and relevant programs. This has included the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water; Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; the Department of Education (on the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy); the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and the National Emergency Management Agency and Australia's Chief Scientist.

This framework supported the Australian Government in responding to formal requests for funding support from the South Australian Government quickly.

The Australian Government has contributed \$68.7 million to the response effort. With South Australia's contributions, over \$165 million is being invested, including the \$102.5 million Algal Bloom Summer Plan is focused on three core objectives: ensuring South Australians maintain their way of life; backing coastal businesses and communities; and advancing research and protecting the environment.

Australia's ocean economy is valued at over \$229 billion (AIMS Marine Index 2025) and is underpinned by a healthy and resilient ocean environment. As the ocean faces immediate and long-term impacts from increased global ocean temperatures, improved marine preparedness planning across all jurisdictions will be critical to protecting the marine environment and the industries and communities that rely on it.

At the Environment Ministers' Meeting held on 27 March 2026, Ministers discussed the significant impact of the Harmful Algal Bloom event and the strength of the South Australian and Australian Government's response to the event. Ministers agreed to convene an intergovernmental workshop across the Australian, state and local governments to share the lessons learned to inform federal, state and territory preparedness efforts. The Australian Government has also commissioned a National Environmental Science Program project that will consider strategies and policies across all levels of government, and create tools to help us prepare for future harmful algal blooms, including better early warning, forecasting and mitigation of risks. The interjurisdictional workshop and the NESP Project will inform future preparedness efforts.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024-2030 and Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024-2030 sets targets including for minimising the impact of climate change on biodiversity. To guide collective national action to achieve all jurisdictions' ambitious biodiversity targets, Ministers agreed the Implementation Plan for Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024-2030 at the Environment Ministers' Meeting held on 27 March 2026.

The Australian Government's Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032 is a framework that incorporates research, actions and monitoring to recover Australian threatened species. It includes targets on climate change and planning for emergencies, and is supported by investments from the Saving Native Species Program, Natural Heritage Trust and National Environmental Science Program.

These national frameworks provide fit for purpose approaches to research, monitoring and management of biodiversity in the changing climate.

**Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends the Australian Government consider reviewing and expanding arrangements for a new definition for declaring how climate induced, slow-onset and significant ecological events could be incorporated into a broader national framework.

**Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

**Recommendation 3**

The committee recommends the Australian Government defines the roles of the Commonwealth, states and territories and local governments throughout the management and response of climate induced, slow-onset and significant ecological events such as harmful algal blooms

**Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian, South Australian and local governments have contributed to the response efforts.

In Australia, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for protecting life, property and the environment within their borders, including within their state waters.

In November 2023, Environment Ministers from all states and territories agreed to work together to better protect critical areas of the environment prior to and during natural disasters. Since then, jurisdictions have shared information about how they have included biodiversity assets in emergency management arrangements.

The Australian Government's Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032 includes an objective to prevent new extinctions and specific targets for improving emergency response management and planning for important biodiversity assets across jurisdictions.

In support of biodiversity emergency preparedness at regional levels, the Australian Government provided \$13 million to Natural Resource Management Regional Delivery Partners (NRM RDPs) over 2023-2024 across Australia to deliver biodiversity and agricultural natural capital emergency preparedness and response plans. The NRM RDPs play a pivotal role in their communities for guidance and action before, during and after events such as cyclones, severe storms, bushfires, floods and heatwaves.

**Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider sustained funding for long-term oceanographic and algal bloom-specific research and monitoring programs at the national level, including through the utilisation of the Office for Algal Bloom Research in South Australia.

**Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian Government has invested \$68.7 million in the algal bloom response efforts, and the \$165 million combined funding support with South Australia is delivering oceanographic and algal bloom research and monitoring, and funding to establish the Office for Algal Bloom Research in South Australia. This includes \$17.3 million into research and monitoring actions under the Summer Plan, including actions to:

- improve real-time ecosystem monitoring, offshore water analysis and algal bloom mitigation trials, along with state-of-the-art AI-powered portable live detection technology to improve understanding of phytoplankton communities over time.
- support real-time oceanographic water quality monitoring and forecasting through a collaboration with CSIRO, including the acquisition of state-of-the-art monitoring buoy to support early detection of algal blooms.
- support the establishment of a National Office for Algal Bloom Research in South Australia. This office will serve as a central hub for national integration of algal bloom science and undertake vital long-term research into the formation, spread and impact of algal bloom events.

**National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy**

The Australian Government funds world-class research infrastructure through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). Funding under NCRIS helps support the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS) to operate a wide range of observing equipment throughout Australia's ocean estate. IMOS has operated since 2006 and is designed to be a fully integrated, national system, observing at ocean-basin and regional scales. IMOS' portfolio is operated across different institutions to deploy equipment, undertake systematic and sustained observation of Australia's marine environment, and deliver trusted data streams for use by Australian researchers. IMOS makes all its data openly and freely accessible to researchers, including the marine and climate science community, international collaborators and other stakeholders.

IMOS' Australian Plankton Survey measures plankton communities around Australia using Continuous Plankton Recorders (CPRs). The long-term datasets of Australian plankton sampled and processed by the Australian Plankton Survey provide researchers and policymakers with environmental and climatic indicators, harmful algal bloom detection, eutrophication, and pollution information at both local and national scales.

#### Ocean monitoring and research

Australia is a world leader in marine research, with many dedicated ocean research and monitoring programs. The ongoing work of the Bureau of Meteorology and IMOS provide real-time data on temperature, salinity, ocean currents, turbidity, and the presence of phytoplankton in southern Australian waters working with the South Australian Research Development Institute.

Understanding how the ocean and ecosystems are changing through long-term and comprehensive monitoring and modelling is important to inform our knowledge of the ocean and how it is being affected by changing ocean temperatures. Work to help inform the prioritisation of scientific efforts and resource allocation, includes the next decadal National Marine Science Strategy, launched on 26 March 2026, that was led by the National Marine Science Committee.

#### *Aquawatch*

The Australian Government has provided \$2 million of additional funding to CSIRO's Aquawatch program in response to the harmful algal bloom. AquaWatch combines satellite and ocean-based observing technologies to provide estimates of marine and freshwater water quality. The funding enhanced Australia's national capability in near-real time water quality and sea surface temperature monitoring, forecasting and environmental intelligence, strengthening long-term monitoring and forecasting of harmful algal blooms. Work programs under this package include:

- Delivering near real time, high-resolution sea surface temperature mapping across Australia's continental coastal waters.
- Establishing consistent, reliable, and spatially comprehensive water quality information from the Murray River through to South Australia's estuarine and coastal environments and generating satellite-derived coastal water quality maps.
- Implementing deep learning forecasting models that predict coastal water quality conditions using satellite Earth observation data for selected Australian regions.
- Developing comprehensive bio-optical and genetic reference database for harmful algal bloom species using samples from South Australia and cultures from the national algae collection.

#### *Marine heatwave forecasts*

The Australian Government has delivered a new marine heatwave forecast that is available to the public via the Bureau of Meteorology's website. The forecasts provide advance warning of the likelihood, location and severity of marine heatwaves up to four months ahead. The tool will help governments, industry, researchers and the public understand forecast ocean temperatures and weather patterns, and enable informed decision making.

### *National Environmental Science Program*

The Australian Government is working to understand the impact of the algal bloom on marine species and ecosystems, with over \$455,000 of emerging priority funding from the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) Marine and Coastal Hub. Projects will:

- Deliver a comprehensive assessment of harmful algal bloom impacts on seafloor ecosystems using habitat imagery, fish assemblage surveys and environmental data.
- Develop a tool to assess harmful algal bloom impacts on food web health on underwater rocky reefs across South Australia, track ecosystem recovery, and identify areas vulnerable to future events.
- Undertake a rapid on-the-ground investigation into the toxicology of the *Karenia* species bloom currently in South Australian waters.
- Develop strategies and policies across all levels of government, and create tools to help us prepare for future harmful algal blooms, including better early warning, forecasting and mitigation of risks.

These projects are underway with fieldwork and analysis expected over the coming months. The results and findings from these projects are expected by the end of the 2026.

### *Proposed Priority Assessment List and Threatened Species Scientific Committee*

The South Australian Government, scientists and Australian Government are working hard to understand the impact of the algal bloom on marine species. After corresponding with the Chair of the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC), the Minister for the Environment and Water agreed to prioritise species and ecological communities impacted by the harmful algal bloom event for consideration for listing as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The theme for the 2026 public nomination period for potential threatened species and ecological communities is: 'Nominations that support the protection and recovery of species and ecological communities at risk from the impacts of the harmful algal bloom off the coast of South Australia'. Public nominations (for species, ecological communities and threatening processes) opened in late 2025 and close on the 31 March 2026. The TSSC will consider eligible nominations and provide advice to the Minister on those that should be prioritised for full assessment.

In February 2026, the Minister for the Environment and Water appointed two new members to the TSSC. Both members are marine science experts who will further support the TSSC's future consideration of species and ecosystems at risk due to the impacts of the algal bloom.

### *Giant Australian cuttlefish*

The Australian Government has committed \$250,000 through the Savings Native Species program towards an innovative air bubble curtain to reduce the risk of the algal bloom impacting the giant Australian cuttlefish in the South Australian Upper Spencer Gulf. The bloom did not reach the Upper Spencer Gulf giant Australian cuttlefish breeding site in 2025 and the bubble curtain was not activated. The 2025 hatching season has finished, and monitoring has shown successful breeding. The Australian Government will continue to work with the South Australian Government to protect this species ahead of the 2026 breeding season.

**Recommendation 5**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider options for substantial funding to be directed to projects that deliver large-scale, long-term marine ecosystem restoration and resilience including meaningful reef restoration along the South Australian coastline.

**Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian Government and South Australian Government are investing \$20.6 million in environmental protection and restoration activities under the Algal Bloom Summer Plan, including actions to:

- support seagrass and blue carbon restoration projects.
- deliver large-scale native oyster reef restoration in the Yorke Peninsula.
- deliver several smaller scale community-led reef restoration projects.
- pursue investigation and trialling of various algal bloom mitigation and real-time detection techniques.

This work builds on previous native oyster reef restoration activities supported by the Australian Government's \$20 million Reef Builder program that included three projects in South Australia waters.

The Australian Government notes that as pressures on our coasts and ocean increase, there is a need to accelerate ecosystem restoration and adaptation of coastal and ocean ecosystems. Improving our understanding of the impacts of climate change, the resilience capacity of ecosystems and species, and effectively monitoring and managing these changes will be critical to achieving long-term marine ecosystem restoration and resilience.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024-2030 sets targets including for minimising the impact of climate change on biodiversity. To guide collective national action to achieve all jurisdictions' ambitious biodiversity targets, Ministers agreed the Implementation Plan for Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024-2030 at the Environment Ministers' Meeting held on 27 March 2026.

**IMOS' National Reef Monitoring Network**

Supported by the NCRIS program, IMOS' National Reef Monitoring Network brings together shallow reef surveys conducted around Australia (and globally) into a centralised database. The data provided by the National Reef Monitoring Network contributes to establishing and supporting national marine baselines, state of the environment reporting and assisting with the management of Commonwealth and State marine reserves. The data is also heavily used by researchers around the world. The National Reef Monitoring Network belongs to IMOS' Autonomous Underwater Vehicles Facility, which finished in June 2023, with the data remaining available through the Australian Ocean Data Network (AODN) Portal.

**Saving Native Species program**

The Australian Government is funding large scale projects that deliver meaningful restoration, benefitting many native species. For example, more than 95% of giant kelp forests have disappeared from Australia's south-eastern coastlines in recent decades. The Australian Government's Saving Native Species program is funding the University of Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies project to improve ecological conditions for the Giant Kelp Forests of Tasmania. Over five hectares of rocky reef was replanted in 2024 and 2025, including propagation of over one million juvenile giant kelps, removal of 10,000 invasive sea urchins and translocation of 50,000 undersized lobsters from deep, cold southern waters to the restoration sites.

#### **Recommendation 6**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government considers investing funds towards the Southern Ocean Discovery Centre for the establishment of a world-class marine education, research, and tourism hub in South Australia.

#### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Investment in visitor infrastructure is a priority of THRIVE 2030, the national strategy for the long-term sustainable growth of the visitor economy. Nature-based tourism, including coastal and marine tourism, is an important driver of visitation and therefore Australia's attractiveness as a destination. By integrating educational opportunities into tourism offerings, visitors can gain a deeper appreciation of Australia's unique marine ecosystems and the importance of their preservation, reinforcing Australia's reputation as a world-class destination. The Government will consider opportunities to support marine education research and tourism in line with the THRIVE strategy and existing programs.

#### **Recommendation 7**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government and South Australian Government evaluate the current investment towards community resilience programs and mental health support services and explore continued or further investment as required for communities impacted by the toxic algal bloom.

#### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

This is primarily a matter for the South Australian Government.

Through the Health, Disability and Ageing portfolio, the Australian Government is investing an estimated \$8 billion in 2025-26 in mental health and suicide prevention. This investment will deliver critical mental health services and expand the range and reach of free mental health support available. This builds on consecutive investments to grow the mental health workforce, address urgent gaps in services and improve digital mental health.

A range of Commonwealth-funded mental health services are available to all Australians with mental health needs. These services afford people with a range of choice and are

adapted to specific challenges. This includes the Australian Government’s Medicare Mental Health Check In Service which launched on 1 January 2026. It is a new digital mental health service providing early support for those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, mild mental health challenges, or transient distress. It is free to access and available without a referral or diagnosis.

The Government funds Primary Health Networks, including the Adelaide and Country Primary Health Networks, to plan and commission regionally appropriate mental health and suicide prevention services at low or no cost where appropriate. This includes low to moderate intensity face-to-face and digital services, and psychological therapies for rural and remote, under-serviced and/or hard to reach populations. This is in addition to the mainstream mental health services commissioned by Primary Health Networks, including Medicare Mental Health Centres.

#### **Recommendation 8**

The committee recommends that the South Australian Government provides timely, clear and scientifically informed public health advice.

#### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

This recommendation is a matter for the South Australian Government.

#### **Recommendation 9**

The committee notes the current investment to supporting coastal communities and recommends that the Australian Government consider allocation of joint funding for community financial support, which could be delivered through local governments as untied grants.

#### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

While local government is the exclusive Constitutional purview of the states and territories which retain responsibility for the appropriate funding of councils, the Australian Government recognises the important work of local government.

Submissions to the 2024 House of Representatives Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability suggest that many councils, particularly smaller councils such as those likely to be affected by algal bloom events, have limited capacity to adopt additional service delivery beyond their core obligations. Where such capacity does exist, transferring administrative responsibilities from the Commonwealth, states and territories to local government would absorb council resources which could be otherwise directed to enhancing core service obligations.

**Recommendation 10**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider how it can support work with the South Australian Government on long-term resilience and recovery programs for marine-related industries and sectors affected by the harmful algal bloom including fishing and tourism, in concert with industry. This could include exploring:

- a targeted income support program, akin to Job Keeper, for impacted businesses.
- a voluntary lease or buyback scheme for fishing licences, to provide individuals and businesses the opportunity to remain in or exit the industry; and
- a tourism recovery fund to support public information campaigns and promotional efforts to rebuild SA's tourism reputation, drive visitation, and support nature-based and marine businesses as they recover.

**Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian Government has been working in partnership with the South Australian Government to support marine-related industries and sectors affected by the harmful algal bloom. The Algal Bloom Summer Plan is investing over \$27 million to back businesses and communities, including \$6.1 million towards coastal infrastructure and events, and \$21.5 million for business support grants and industry resilience.

Targeted income support program

The JobKeeper Payment was designed in response to a specific economic shock and is not an appropriate framework for responding to the South Australian algal bloom. The Independent Evaluation of the JobKeeper Payment found that a JobKeeper-type wage subsidy should be reserved for a macroeconomic crisis and concluded that it is not appropriate for industry- or region-specific shocks or downturns in Australia. Some of the key benefits of JobKeeper, including economy-wide stabilisation and reducing macroeconomic uncertainty, are not relevant in these circumstances.

Voluntary lease or buyback scheme

The Australian Government notes the South Australian Government is conducting a study to examine the long-term sustainability of the Marine Scalefish Fishery, including the possibility of a voluntary licence buyback program. A decision to implement a buyback program for South Australian fisheries is a matter for the South Australian Government.

Tourism recovery

The Australian Government continues to support state and territory governments, including South Australia, by investing in the recovery and resilience of the tourism and supporting the South Australian algal bloom response.

Actions being delivered in South Australia as part of the algal bloom response include public information campaigns and promotional efforts to strengthen South Australia's tourism reputation and encourage visitation to impacted regions. A \$20.5 million component of the Summer Plan is supporting coastal tourism businesses through dining and travel vouchers and a coastal tourism marketing campaign to help drive visitation.

**Recommendation 11**

The committee recommends the Australian Government finalises and brings forward the legislative instruments (or amendments, if required) necessary to ensure eligibility for wild catch fisheries and affected marine businesses under the Regional Investment Corporation Fund. These need to be tabled for consideration without further delay.

**Response**

The Australian Government agrees to this recommendation.

The Australian Government will make loans available through the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) for wild-catch fishing or aquaculture businesses affected by the algal bloom in South Australia as soon as possible.

On 11 December 2025, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Julie Collins MP, announced the provision of a new stream of RIC loans to assist with slow-onset significant ecological events: the Marine Harmful Algal Bloom and Marine Heatwave Loan (now known as the Marine Recovery Loan). This loan will help South Australian wild-catch fishing or aquaculture businesses affected by the recent algal bloom.

These loans will complement the support also available to wild-catch fishing and aquaculture businesses through the jointly funded Algal Bloom Summer Plan.

The Australian Government recognises the urgency of the loans being made available to affected businesses as soon as possible. The loan program is expected to launch in the first half of 2026.

The RIC has established a registration page for businesses interested in applying for the Marine Recovery Loan (<https://www.ric.gov.au/new-loans>).

**Recommendation 12**

The committee recommends the Australian Government, through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, support the South Australian Government in conducting research and monitoring of fish stocks during and following fishing restrictions, and undertake a comprehensive impact analysis of fishing in the Gulf St Vincent. This analysis should assess the ecological, social, and economic implications to inform appropriate financial support for affected communities and guide the recovery of local ecosystems and fish stocks.

**Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) has met with the South Australian Government regarding research needs associated with the algal bloom. This has included discussing the incorporation of rapid stock assessment techniques and alternative stock assessment approaches through FRDC project 2024-078: 'An Australian Stock Assessment "Community of Practice": building a collaborative community of stock assessment practitioners to better support sustainable fisheries management and consideration of the development of a national stock assessment subprogram by FRDC to

scope innovations in assessment methodologies. FRDC is in frequent contact with the South Australian Government regarding research priorities.

### **Recommendation 13**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider establishing a dedicated Local Government Resilience Fund to provide ongoing and flexible financial assistance to support local councils in responding to climate induced and slow-onset and significant ecological events.

### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Local government is the exclusive Constitutional purview of the states and territories which retain responsibility for the appropriate funding of councils.

The Australian Government has referred the matter of local government funding and fiscal sustainability to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport for inquiry. The inquiry will examine the evolving obligations of local governments as well as the broader system of funding across all levels of government that supports them. This is important work, and the Australian Government will consider any changes to its policies supporting local government in the context of the inquiry's eventual findings and recommendations.

Meanwhile, the Australian Government continues to support local governments to deliver for their communities. In 2025-26 the Government will provide \$3.4 billion to local governments through the Financial Assistance (FA) Grant, including \$1.7 billion brought forward and paid in June 2025. Individual council allocations of FA Grant funding are determined by the states and territories in accordance with the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* (the Act). States and territories have broad discretion under the Act to allocate funding based on fiscal need which can include consideration of costs borne by councils in meeting ecological factors.

### **Recommendation 14**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider First Nation leadership and cultural knowledge in all aspects of recovery and management, including:

- integrating first nation scientific knowledge into marine monitoring and restoration programs.
- providing dedicated funding for recovery and business support for impacted First Nation enterprises.
- ensuring that First Nation expertise in land and sea management is sought where these issues affect cultural knowledge and practice; and
- expanding and resourcing Indigenous ranger and sea country programs in affected coastal regions, with roles for First Nation representatives in the new Office for Algal Bloom Research.

### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian Government notes the significant impacts of the algal bloom on First Nations fisheries, agribusiness, tourism and the distinctive cultural connections to waters across South Australia. First Nation scientific knowledge, expertise and leadership in land and sea management are a critical part of restoration, recovery and monitoring efforts to improve response and preparedness for future marine events.

The Australian Government notes that Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) rangers are participating in the coordinated algal bloom response in South Australia. Rangers from the Point Pearce Aboriginal Corporation have combined their local knowledge of Country and expertise to conduct daily patrols, record findings, and coordinate clean-ups on prioritised beaches along the Yorke Peninsula.

#### Indigenous Rangers Program

The Australian Government administers the Indigenous Ranger Program (IRP), assisting First Nations people to manage Country in accordance with Traditional Owners' objectives. The IRP delivers a broad range of benefits, including environmental, cultural, social and economic development outcomes. The Government has committed to double the number of Indigenous rangers to 3,800 by 2030 and work towards gender equality in ranger positions by expanding and diversifying the IRP.

#### Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Program

The Australian Government has committed \$231.5 million over five years from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2028 to continue, improve, and expand the IPA Program.

The IPA Program supports First Nations groups to manage land and Sea Country through voluntary agreements with the Australian Government. Established in 1997, the program has grown to 95 dedicated projects nationally, representing more than 54 percent of Australia's National Reserve System on land and over six million hectares of Sea Country. IPAs are managed for biodiversity conservation, with activities guided by Traditional Owners and informed by two-way science. Sea Country projects can support the restoration and protection of waterways, ensuring cultural knowledge is embedded in environmental management.

#### Australian Bushland Program

In the 2025-26 Budget the Government announced the \$250 million Australian Bushland Program to help deliver on the target to protect and conserve 30% of land by 2030. This will include \$13 million funding to further expand the IPA Program to fund at least eight new IPA consultation projects. This new IPA grant round opened on 13 January and closed on 11 March 2026.

## Greens Additional Comments/Recommendations

### Response

**Recommendation 1.13** That the Australian Government declare the toxic algal bloom a national disaster.

### Response

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian Government does not have a formal 'national disaster' declaration. Despite this, the Australian Government has provided extensive financial support and direct investment to South Australia, industries and communities affected by the algal bloom event without requiring any formal declaration to be made.

**Recommendation 1.14** That the Australian Government invest \$500 million to the Marine Environment Restoration Fund to enable urgent, large-scale recovery and resilience projects in South Australian waters, prioritising meaningful reef restoration and seagrass regeneration.

**Response** The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Australian Government is committed to meaningful protection and restoration of the marine environment. Further information regarding the Australian Government's investment in marine restoration and resilience is detailed in the response to Recommendations 4 and 5.

**Recommendation 1.15** That the Australian Government accelerate investment in a national harmful algal bloom research centre, to lead early warning, rapid response, and long-term research initiatives.

**Response** The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

The Algal Bloom Summer Plan is providing \$3.2 million to support the establishment of a National Office for Algal Bloom Research in South Australia. This office will serve as a central hub for national integration of algal bloom science and undertake vital long-term research into the formation, spread and impact of algal bloom events.

**Recommendation 1.16** That the Australian Government establish a dedicated Local Government Climate Resilience Fund to allow quick access to funds for communities experiencing climate related disasters.

### Response

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Local government is the exclusive Constitutional purview of the states and territories which retain responsibility for the appropriate funding of councils.

The Government has referred the matter of local government funding and fiscal sustainability to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport for inquiry. The inquiry will examine the evolving obligations of local governments as well as the broader system of funding across all levels of government that supports them.

**Recommendation 1.17** That the South Australian Government review their health advice in light of updated information on the dominant algal species in the bloom and the presence of brevetoxins being detected in water sampling. Health authorities should ensure advice is regularly assessed, accessible and transparent.

### **Response**

The Australian Government notes this recommendation and that it is a matter for the South Australian Government.