



“It’s important we monitor lyngbya in the bay because at some stages of its life cycle it can be toxic.”

JASON FONG

Artis Robinson, Gayan Gunaratnes and Jason Fong examine seagrasses in Roebuck Bay.

Picture: Flip Prior

# Seagrass scientists study bay patterns

FLIP PRIOR

IN A WA first, Yawuru Aboriginal rangers are contributing vital new research into triggers of destructive blooms of the blue-green algae lyngbya majuscula in Broome’s Roebuck Bay. Seagrasses along the mudflats a critical feeding habitat for dugongs and turtles and hundreds of thousands of migratory birds – have been smothered to death by thick slimy mats of the algae every year for close to a decade.

Hard to eradicate and highly toxic, it kills crabs and other shellfish, and also causes severe skin and respiratory illness, and nausea in humans who come into contact with it.

Over the next three years, Department of Environment

research the bay’s hydrology and the level of nutrients flowing into it.

The Sri Lanka-born scientist said he would spend the next three wet seasons in Broome to carry out fieldwork.

His PhD supervisor associate professor Ryan Vogwill said scientists already had a good idea of what caused the blooms but hoped research would confirm their theory.

Lyngbya can naturally occur at low levels, but it is thought a combination of high wet-season temperatures, iron-rich pindan soils, and nutrients in urban run-off, have caused it to bloom.

However, groundwater from Dampier Peninsula also discharged into the inter-tidal zone from the land into the ocean.

Associate professor Vogwill said Mr Gunaratnes aimed to

was groundwater, so it could be better managed.

“It has to be the nutrients – there’s not much else it can be – but we still need to prove it so we can go to the Government and come up with a way to tackle it and try and reduce it,” Associate Professor Vogwill said.

He said the rangers’ local knowledge and help with fieldwork would be invaluable.

Yawuru ranger Jason Fong said the team would monitor water levels, sample drains and conduct regular lyngbya scans over the build-up and wet seasons for Conservation and Land Management certificate study.

“It’s important we monitor Lyngbya in the bay because at some stages of its life cycle it can be toxic,” he said.

People who see lyngbya outbreaks should call Department of Environment and Conserva-

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**Government of Western Australia  
Department of Transport**

## Temporary Notice to Mariners Deployment of Monitoring James Price Point Time Extension

This Notice extends Not2010-116, published in The Boating News.

Mariners are advised that 12 monitoring sites already established in the James Price Point area will be extended to approximately 20km north & south of James Price Point by November 2012.

Chart Reference: AUS 324

Each monitoring site comprises sensors and logging equipment mounted on a yellow 60cm surface marker buoy.

No vessel is to moor to, or interfere with, the above equipment. Vessels may dislodge the seabed monitoring equipment.

Mariners are advised to navigate with caution when in the area.

Raymond Buchholz  
Acting General Manager  
Marine Safety  
Department of Transport