

Broome Advertiser

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Dig deep

Drilling finds water source

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Job set

Shell prepares indigenous youth

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On a roll

Teens take to lawn bowls

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Plant site pollutes bay area

Glenn Cordingley

The site of a wastewater recycling plant just a few hundred metres from majestic Roebuck Bay in Broome has been declared contaminated.

And the Department of Environment Regulation could not rule out it posed a danger to humans and the surrounding ecosystem.

The DER said the contamination appeared to be seepage from containment ponds that had caused excessive levels of nitrogen and phosphorous to leach into the soil and groundwater with "a plume that extended off-site".

The *Broome Advertiser* revealed in March the DER had directed the Water Corporation to carry out hydro-geological studies after an outbreak of toxic blue-green algae in Roebuck Bay, a tourist drawcard famous for its pearly history and abundant marine life.

The DER has now classified the Broome South site as "contaminated — remediation required" and the golf course next door, which uses water from the facility to irrigate the course, as "possibly contaminated".

The DER said it had consulted with the Department of Health and "no risk to human health had been identified to date".

"However, contaminants identified in the groundwater exceed the tropical Australian aquatic ecosystems guidelines," a DER spokesperson said. "Therefore, further assessment is required to determine the potential risks to human health, the environment or any environmental value."

The State Government is considering giving most of Roebuck Bay marine park status.

Roebuck Bay Working Group project manager Kandy Curran believes water from the containment ponds was leaching into the bay and triggering worsening blooms of lyngbya (blue-green algae).

"We urge the Water Corporation to undertake works to prevent leaks of nutrients into one of the most beautiful and bio-diverse bays on the planet," she said.

The DER said further groundwater investigation was required to determine the nature and extent of the contamination.

The Water Corporation said it would continue to consult with the DER, the Shire of Broome and community groups as environmental investigations progressed and what mitigation may be required.

The Shire last week agreed to pay a consultant to undertake preliminary soil and groundwater investigations at the golf club.



Kimberley rider saddles up for cause

After losing two friends to domestic violence over the years, Broome woman Midge Brown and horse Charlie are ready to start two long-distance rides totalling almost 3000km to raise awareness of the issue.

REPORT PAGE 5 Picture: Gareth McKnight

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