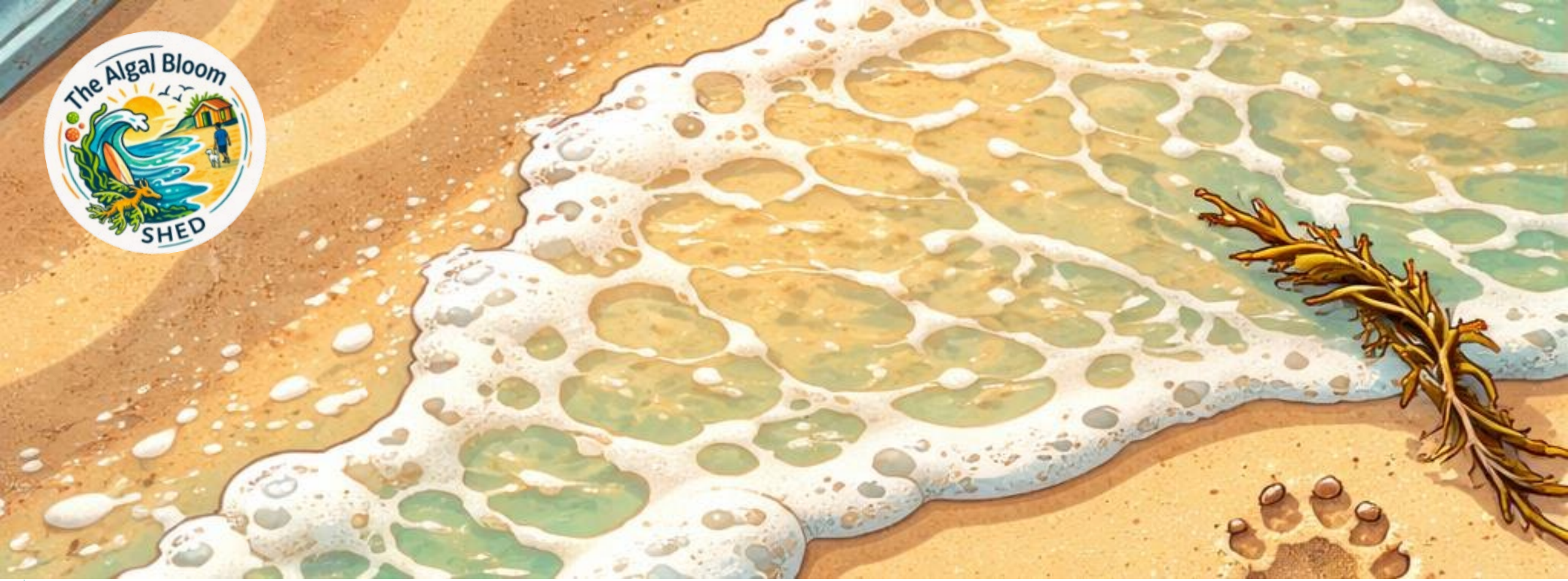

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS OF THE HAB
SHED FINDINGS TO DATE

Jacqueline Stephens (Flinders) & Amy McLennan (ANU / Adelaide) / 3 June 2026

HELLO!
WELCOME TO THE SHED

WHO'S IN THE SHED?
EXPERTS IN A RANGE OF FIELDS

Disaster risk engineer	Anthropologist	Coastal systems scientist	Microbiologist	Epidemiologist	Visual artist
Water governance expert	Trauma psychology specialist	Environmental risk specialist	Climate finance lawyer	Filmmaker	Disaster response clinician
Science communicators	High school teacher	School students	Climate strategy advisor	Political theorist	Systems game designers
Hydrobiologist	Software engineer	GIS modeler	Software engineer	Neuroscientist	Accountant

Systems engineer | Photojournalist | ...

WHAT'S ON IN THE SHED?

Five main areas of work

1. Shed governance and funding
2. Website
3. Impact assessment
4. Education
5. Health

EDUCATION NATIONAL AWARENESS SURVEY

Nationally-representative survey of 1,031 Australian residents (Dec 25)

Low literacy of HABs

Exposure to information prompted concern and behaviour change

High expectations of government action

Risk communication could support timely protective action

Public literacy around systemic disasters: A case study of the South Australian coastal harmful algal bloom

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HEALTH SYMPTOM REPORTING PORTAL

Website launched in Nov 2025, included a health symptom reporting portal

Open data

Compliant with the Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, GDPR, FAIR Principles

FIRST DATA REPORT
MARCH 2026

24 Nov 2025 – 23 Feb 2026
261 human and pet health reports submitted

Caveats:
- Only word-of-mouth referrals
- Survey design limited by ethics requirements

Human health reports

235	76%	1 in 3
People reported symptoms	Female respondents	Sought medical attention

77% of respondents were aged 30 to 69 years. At this stage, we do not have data on potential longer-term health impacts.

Pet health reports

26	54%	37%
Pet incidents reported	Reported vomiting	Breathing difficulties

12% of pets reported diarrhoea. Pet health in ecological disaster scenarios remains poorly understood worldwide, as does the potential impact on veterinarians.

FIRST DATA REPORT
COMMON SYMPTOMS

Top 10 most commonly self-reported human health symptoms

Symptom	n	%
Scratchy cough	138	58.7%
Sore throat	114	48.5%
Headache	89	37.9%
Lethargy	77	32.8%
Breathing difficulty	57	24.3%
Sore eyes	55	23.4%
Sore nose	33	14.0%
Nausea	22	9.4%
Anxiety	20	8.5%
Rash	18	7.7%

HEALTH SYMPTOM REPORTING QUESTIONS

- How might we better assess mental health impacts? What about long-term impacts?
- What can we learn from pet health reports?
- What other retrospective data can we access?
- How might these data inform our impact modelling and education work?

HEALTH SYMPTOM REPORTING
NEXT STEPS

Design, test and implement a detailed health participatory surveillance tool

Share findings and open data

Improve reach and widespread citizen use of reporting tool

- Create an app?
- Integrate with SLSSA forms?
- Seek government endorsement and sharing via official channels?
- Amplify via marketing, local businesses, posters, schools, community?
- Fund a research assistant?

Secure research funding

Identify other data sources

- Vets? Clinical data? SLSSA data? Social media?

NEXT STEPS FOR THE SHED

1. Shed governance and funding
   - Shed Spring Session
2. Website
   - Expand library and resources
   - Publish peer-reviewed commentaries
3. Impact assessment
   - Data collection
   - Model fine-tuning
4. Education
   - Educational videos
   - Shed speaker series
5. Health
   - Workforce capacity

THANK YOU

On behalf of all the experts in The Shed

www.algalbloomshed.com.au