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Scientists Unveil Seven-Point Strategy to Combat South Australia's Toxic Algal Crisis

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South Australian scientists have proposed a seven-point plan to address the catastrophic toxic algal bloom caused by *Karenia mikimotoi*, which has devastated marine life and industries since March 2025. This article outlines the plan, its focus on monitoring and mitigation, and critiques of the Labor government's response to the crisis.

The algal bloom, covering 4,500 square kilometres, has killed more than 13,800 marine animals across 400 species, severely impacting fisheries and tourism along South Australia's coast. The seven-point plan, developed by experts from the University of Adelaide and the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), prioritizes enhanced monitoring, rapid response, and ecosystem restoration. Key measures include deploying real-time sensors with an \$8.5 million budget, establishing a national biotoxin testing laboratory funded with \$2 million, and creating a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) taskforce to provide weekly updates. Professor Justin Brookes explained that the bloom's growth was driven by the combination of nutrients, warm temperatures, and sunlight provided by the ongoing marine heatwave.

The bloom, fueled by a marine heatwave since September 2024 and nutrient-rich runoff from the 2022–23 River Murray floods, has spread from the Fleurieu Peninsula to Adelaide's Port River. Ecologist Faith Coleman, who has been monitoring the crisis, warned that the bloom could persist for up to 18 months if winter conditions do not interrupt it. The plan also allocates \$3 million for fish stock assessments and \$2 million to support coastal communities affected by the disaster.

Critics, including opposition leader David Speirs, have labelled the Labor government's \$28 million aid package as reactive and insufficient. Speirs called for a royal commission to investigate the causes and prevention of such blooms. The government's reluctance to declare a national disaster has drawn significant criticism from various quarters. The plan offers hope for recovery, but without stronger and faster action, South Australia's marine ecosystems and related industries face ongoing and severe challenges.