

GAA/FIN 133

Helen Stone

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
29 November 2019

Mr Stuart Wright
Inquiry Secretary
Parliament House, HOBART 7000
finfish@parliament.tas.gov.au

Submission to Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration A -Sub-Committee - Fin Fish Farming in Tasmania Inquiry

Dear Mr Wright

I moved to White Beach on the Tasman Peninsula 16 years ago to enjoy the peaceful, quiet environment and to fish and swim in the clear waters. During that time, with the permission of the Tasmanian Government, Tassal has extensively increased the number of salmon farming pens from just a few in the entrance to Parsons Bay, to a huge industrial lot, stretching out into Wedge Bay, with a further gigantic industrial lot to be installed near Wedge Island. Tassal has also in recent times, introduced bright lighting during the night hours, which presents light pollution to a previously pleasant dark vista. The lights are driven by generators, the noise from which drifts across the bay in a low drone all night long. Such light and noise pollution overnight would not be allowed on land adjacent to a residential area, so should not be allowed on the water! Local residents were never notified or even asked if they would object to this activity. The local quarry would not be allowed to operate with this level of light and noise overnight!

I have also noticed a marked change in the water quality. There has been a significant increase in the presence of green filamentous algae, both in the water and washed up in piles on the shores at White Beach. The algae wraps around fishing lines and nets used for recreational/subsistence fishing and is extremely difficult to remove.

In my research of the Tasmanian Government's regulations regarding the above, it appears that the bar is set so low for charges of water pollution, the salmon companies are easily maintaining what appears to be environmental responsibility. I understand that the naturally occurring seagrass is being blanketed by the filamentous algae, thereby reducing the opportunity for wild fish to feed and thrive.

The farming of salmon in itself is allowed to operate inconsistently with other farming practices and animal welfare. For example, thousands of fish are jammed into pens with little space to swim freely (in comparison to farming of battery hens). Thousands of salmon die during the 'washing' process. Thousands of wild fish that are caught in the pens when small, are killed when they grow and cannot escape. Seals are deterred by shooting 'beanbag pellets' at them, without care to avoid harm.

The sight of the salmon farm pens is a disgusting blot on the waterscape, and whilst the community might be accused of having a NIMBY attitude, the reality is that property values are adversely impacted by an industrial view.

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The existence of the vast industrial farm lots impedes recreational boating access to wild fisheries around the bay. The distance that has to be traversed to access the shores from one side of the bay to the other has increased considerably, in order to skirt around the fish farm.

It is difficult for ordinary community members to complain or comment about the changes by Government/fishfarm companies to their environment. The bureaucratic processes are not easy to negotiate. Community members are not contacted personally to advise of proposed changes to their environment and to ask for their input, let alone their permission!

The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel set up to assess the increase in salmon farming in May 2018 treated the community members making submissions with such disdain as to argue with presenters at the hearings, and to make those people feel very uncomfortable in utilising their right to comment or complain. People who made submissions were not given the courtesy of a written acknowledgement or response to their submissions.

It appears that the Tasmanian Government does not make provision for appropriate resources to monitor the activities of the salmon farming companies. In fact, the companies appear to undertake the monitoring themselves. This is incongruent with the monitoring by Government of most other business operations, eg mining, quarrying, industrial noise etc.

I endorse the following recommendations by the Tasmanian Conservation Trust 1. Complete independent water quality and environmental studies, before any environmental licences are issued (not an “adaptive management” approach)., 2. Environmental licences must set a hard cap on biomass and dissolved nitrogen and other pollutants emitted into our waterways from pens, hatcheries and other infrastructure., 3. Require all licences and licence amendments (marine and land based) to be referred to the EPA board so that the community can have a say., 4. Commission an independent review of the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel, focusing on its membership, governance and ties to industry., 6. Mandate public reporting for disease outbreaks and other bio-security incidents., 7. Amend the Marine Farming Planning Act to require valuation and protection of social, recreational and visual amenity; and consideration of noise impacts on surrounding residents.

Thank you for reviewing my submission

Yours Sincerely

Helen Stone