

GAA/FIN 169
Colette Harmsen

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[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

Legislative Council enquiry into the Salmon Industry

My name is Colette and I live in North West Bay. Fish farming started in my locality a while back but I can remember when there was no fish farming in my area. With the introduction of fish farming came the commencement of noise pollution, visual pollution and rubbish pollution along with overgrowth of seaweed and the increase of boats traveling to and from the area. As a concerned member of the community I asked questions frequently and was not satisfied by the replies. I requested answers from council members and state government and was disappointed by the responses.

Here are my concerns in relation to the following topics to do with fish farming in Tasmania:

Planning of finfish farming in Tasmania

Finfish farming is growing exponentially. The State government is hell bent on providing all the support that they can to this industry. The industry is reliant on public waterways and I believe not enough consultation has been given to the community who uses these waterways. Fish farms seem to have a monopoly on public waterways in Tasmania despite serious community backlash. Not only do they monopolise these space but unlike the local community, they do not pay for the use of these places. We cannot enter the areas that are taken up by fish farms and will be punished for entering spaces allocated to fish farms. The State Government gives the go-ahead to expansions of fish farming all over Tasmania despite opposition by scientists and local communities. The current issues with fish farms are large and ongoing. Things will only get worse as the industry expands with the help of local government.

Assessment of finfish farming in Tasmania

When asked, fish farm operators assure us that monitoring of the environment in the vicinity of fish farms is a regulated and standardised practice. I have requested the results of environmental monitoring based on data analysis and have not been directed to studies that indicate what is going on in the environment around fish farms. I am not convinced that monitoring is an independently run activity. Who collects the data and who analyses it? Can we be satisfied that the data is collected and analysed by an independent party, or does the fish farming industry have anything to the collection and investigation of this data? The industry says that salmon

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[REDACTED]
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farming is a clean and green industry, yet we hear about the effects of excess food and faeces that increases nutrients in the vicinity of fish farms, and we hear about the scum that covers the seabed beneath fish farm pens and I can't help but think that the truth is being hidden from us.

Operation of finfish farming in Tasmania

The current operation of fish farms in my local area has caused major problems for me, my family and my neighbours. Noise pollution is a big problem for us, as is the inappropriate visual effects of pens, boats and infrastructure in the bay. Boats continue to come and go outside of working hours and although it is difficult to prove whose boat is travelling during the night or early morning (as we do not have access to night vision goggles) it would be foolish to assume that fish farm boats were not involved. Current fish farm operation means that there is excessive nutrient loads in the water. Overgrowth of seaweed is evident where we live and green and brown algae cover the rocks at certain times of the year where previous to fish farms, there was no overgrowth.

Regulation of finfish farming in Tasmania

DPIPWE, MAST, local council groups and the EPA are meant to control and regulate salmon farms in Tasmania. I do not feel that they provide the independent and impartial governance that we demand from an organisation. Not only that, but the exponential growth of the salmon industry in Tasmania means it is even more difficult to provide impartial advice and regulation and I do not see the required checks and balances to ensure the industry is properly regulated. I fail to see evidence that the EPA is fully independent of the State Government. I wish that local council groups had a better grasp of the finfish industry. I wish that the State Government was not in the pocket of big business. I wish the regulation of finfish farming in Tasmania was more independent.

In conclusion, I believe that the environmental harm of fish farms outweighs the positive practices of the finfish farm industry. Not only does the industry lack the regulation and monitoring required for such an enterprise, but planned development of this industry given the current lack of public license and poor environmental standings means that it would be nonsensical to even consider further expansion. I believe that the scientific reporting on changes in the local environment due to salmon farming has not been accessible to the public. Marine debris continues to be a problem. Noise of boats is an issue. I worry about fur seals. Seaweed coats the rocks on the seaside. There is a lack of transparency of environmental monitoring. It is true that some people are never happy, but I believe I have every right to be unhappy with the current situation with fish farms.

Thank you for reviewing my submission

Yours Sincerely
Colette Harmsen