

GAA/FIN 210

Melinda Huck

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29 November 2019

Mr Stuart Wright
Inquiry Secretary
Parliament House, HOBART 7000
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Submission to Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration A -Sub-Committee - Fin Fish Farming in Tasmania Inquiry

Dear Mr Wright

My name is Melinda Huck and I live close to Gunpowder Jetty on North West Bay. My husband and I moved to Tinderbox in 2015 to enjoy a peaceful life in an Environmental Living Zone living on a beautiful property overlooking the water.

I have many concerns about the environmental impact of fish farming practices, however, I would like to make a statement about the personal impact of living close to Huon Aquaculture's fish farming operations.

At the time we moved to Tinderbox, Gunpowder Jetty was a derelict structure and the area around it was used by local residents and others to fish. The area was quiet and peaceful as you would expect an Environmental Living Zone to be. In 2016 the jetty was closed to the public and Huon Aquaculture commenced using it for their fish farm operations. From then on we were subjected to noisy vessels coming and going on the water directly in front of our property and to industrial operations taking place both at the jetty and on the water in front of us.

Huon Aquaculture has assured us on many occasions that their vessels operate within noise regulation guidelines, however the low frequency drone of the engines and hydraulic equipment that can go on for hours is very distressing. It can be heard through our double glazed windows and has on occasion caused the windows to rattle and pictures on the wall to shake. During the warmer months we prefer to have the windows open which causes much more distress. The vessel movement can occur at any time of the day or night. Recently a vessel towed a pond liner into the jetty at midnight. Bright light from the vessel shone in through our windows and was accompanied by shouting and loud engine noises.

Peter Bender spoke at a community meeting with local residents in Margate on 7th May this year. He assured us that Huon Aquaculture will reduce activities to zero at Gun Powder Jetty but although operations have lessened, for which we are grateful, we are still subjected to episodes of noise and disturbance. In fact this escalated to a new level on 15th November when the Ronja Huon rumbled in and worked on a liner moored directly in front of our house. We are worried that the new well boat, which is much larger, may do the same. In addition, at a meeting with Tassal on 17th October, local residents were informed that Tassal plans to reactivate their lease near Gunpowder Jetty and moor liners there which will service their large new well boat, the Aqua Spa. The Aqua Spa is expected to be operating 24 hours a day. We dread the day these operations commence.

Melinda Huck

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Operations at the jetty often take place outside of council permitted operating hours before 7am and after 7pm Monday to Friday, for example on Sunday 17th November a noisy vessel was working on a liner in front of our house between 7 and 8pm. Another concern is that vessels do not always avoid the exclusion zone in front of Tinderbox, which is there because of previous damage to the environment by fish farming activities.

We have received some assistance from the EPA regarding our concerns but none at all from Kingborough Council when approached about noise disturbance and out of hours operations.

It appears that the fish farms can operate with little or no control.

Apart from the visual and noise disturbance which cause us great distress, the water quality near our home has been impacted by the diesel vessels and is often not pleasant to swim in. Some rocks below our house are now covered in green slimy weed.

We feel very strongly that it is not appropriate for what is effectively heavy industrial activity to be carried out close to a residential area. It is disruptive and distressing to the residents. My husband works in mining and is incredulous about the level of impact that these operations can get away with. He says that the noise from these large vessels required to service the off shore operations is comparable to the large scale trucks and earthmoving equipment used in mining but that fish farming is not regulated as a class 2 industry. It is possible to have vessels powered by lower impact power plants. Given that this equipment is required for servicing the off shore farms the companies should be required to use equipment and vessels with less impact.

I have grave concerns about the lack of regulation of this industry overall. Fish farm companies are continuing to expand exponentially without transparency or adequate control. The impact on the environment has not been adequately investigated and the impact on neighbours of fish farms seems to be of little or no account.

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., 5. Improve transparency and enforcement by prosecuting fish escapes, fish kills, marine debris and seal and cetacean interactions., 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

Melinda Huck