

**Submission To**  
**Legislative Council Inquiry into the Finfish Industry**  
**By**  
**Marlene and Brendan Schmidt**  
**Dennes Point**  
**November 20, 2019**

Mr Stuart Wright,  
Inquiry Secretary  
Parliament House, Hobart 7000

Honourable Members,

We are residents of Dennes Point and own a small sheep farm at this location which has 2 kilometres of waterfront onto The D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Storm Bay and the Derwent River. We have been residents for 17 years and have cared for the land (120 hectares) and environment, flora and fauna in such a manner that we are now being asked to covenant large areas for future protection of all species, endangered or not. We make this point because we are very concerned about the lack of concern for the Marine Environment in Tasmania and our inability to care for the Marine environment.

Having worked careers in Government we realise the necessity for appropriate frameworks, governance, wealth generation and public policy which have an eye for the future. Not an easy balance, but one which can be achieved through broad public consultation and commitment to transparency.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our opinions of the sea based industrial fish industry.

We wish to make observations in three areas; prior to lease establishment, operational frameworks for public waters and a long term future for this industry.

### Prior to Finfish Industrial Operations in Public Waters

1. Establishment of the Base Scientific evidence of lease areas **prior** to establishment, if the finfish industry wants to use public waters.  
We believe that this is a direct responsibility of the State and/or Federal Governments, so that the lease of public resource is scientifically documented to establish the extent of flora and fauna and condition of the marine life and environment. This documentation needs to be **exhaustive** to establish appropriate benchmarks of all resources.

2. We believe from extensive conversations with Marine Scientists that no exhaustive studies have been carried out to their satisfaction prior to finfish leases being granted. Rudimentary or partial scientific studies are not what the public expects from Government when it is dealing with the public's resource. The public expects transparency.
3. We believe that the Finfish industry should not be involved in any aspect of the scientific studies which should be conducted by expert independent institutions with a recorded capability of such scientific evaluations e.g. IMAS
4. Prior to a lease being granted that extensive public consultation should be entered into so that the public is aware of the changes that might eventuate at sea and on land because of the lease of public waters for finfish operations. This public consultation is not to be conducted by the finfish industry but by an independent board (see below) Because of the proximity of finfish leases to land, the impact on private landholders and tourism must be considered before leases are granted, in much the same way as a local Council change of land use is considered.
5. **Recommendation: That prior to any use of a marine public asset that rigorous scientific evaluation is conducted by an Independent Board to establish the flora and fauna and environmental condition of the area to be leased. This report needs to be submitted to an Independent Board as described below, which should make appropriate and transparent recommendations to Government.**
6. **Recommendation: That public consultation be undertaken by an Independent board to hear public concerns about the granting of leases close to private land.**

## Operational concerns

1. The State government should establish an **independent board** to oversee the operational context of the finfish industry using public resources to make a profit for shareholders. I think we have in Australia enough examples of the public good being routed by shareholder interest and being placed well above public interest. (Refer to The Banking Royal Commission)
2. Such an independent board needs to have scientists and general public in the majority so that the finfish industry exists within a framework that will enable productive operations, profits and community expectations on issues such as noise pollution, rubbish, use of fresh water etc.... to be met.
3. The Environmental Protection Authority is a Government instrumentality established to monitor and authorise pollution and licence activities that might endanger the environment. Such Authorities, in Tasmania and elsewhere, have a very dubious record of success of protecting the environment or public interest. For example the Macquarie Harbour Finfish fiasco overseen by the EPA was a scientific and public disaster which demonstrated indifference, incompetence or complicity. The EPA in Tasmania should not be governing any aspect of the finfish industry as the Independent Board should oversee all aspects of the industry.
4. As we have seen in recent years the operational governance of the finfish industry is run by the industry and the recent resignations of the marine scientists from the finfish management body is testament to the lack of Government interest in protecting the public resource.
5. The monitoring of chemical changes in the waters around finfish operations needs to be monitored continuously and the impact on natural species in the area monitored. One reason for this is the algae blooms that are now occurring in the D'Entrecasteaux and the other is the effect on native species caused by chemical additions to the water.

Anecdotally and from our own experience as recreational fishers, the change in fishing in this area of the D'Entrecasteaux and Storm bay is remarkable for its decline.

**Recommendation: That the Government establish an Independent Board with a majority of the Board being scientists and members of the public to overview all aspects of the finfish industry. Members of the public should be elected. Scientists should be selected on the basis of their Marine Science expertise as recognised by UTAS/IMAS.**

### **Future Issues**

1. It is our understanding that the Finfish Industry upon leaving a lease has no obligation to renew/replenish the area to a similar condition, as before finfish use, as established by the scientific report discussed earlier. The obligations for the mining industry to renew/replenish areas when the mine is finished are well documented and no doubt the costs of such a cleanup are factored into price. Some Governments insist on a bond. The finfish industry could have a price per kilo which is contributed to the Independent Board/Government so that on completion of the lease agreement the cleanup can be conducted to public satisfaction.
2. **Recommendation: That the finfish Industry be required to clean up their leases to the satisfaction of the Independent Board to a similar level of environmental condition as established prior to commencement of finfish operations.**
3. We believe that the best outcome for the finfish industry is that it be brought onto land as quickly as possible and that tax payers of Tasmania should assist in this endeavour to protect public waters. The control over the environment and the possibility of on selling waste (nitrogen) to farmers would ensure a final win-win and a sustainable industry into the future. With waters off Tasmania

warming and the necessity for finfish production/capture it is essential that a long term view of the industry be considered. The containment of finfish operations to land is occurring in Canada, Norway, Scotland and Sweden.

- 4. Recommendation: That finfish operations be brought onto land within ten years and that the Tasmanian Government assist in this matter to protect the industry and provide a sustainable future using expertise from IMAS. It would carry, we believe, the support of the general public, something the finfish industry does not currently hold.**

Yours faithfully,

**Mrs. Marlene Schmidt**

**Dr. Brendan Schmidt**