

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

25 November 2019

Finfish inquiry

Please see my comments in relation to salmon farming in Huon/Channel waters.

I have lived at the mouth of the Huon River for over 60 years. I can only provide anecdotal evidence. I am a farmer and have been a recreational fisher; I am not a scientist, a diver or keeper of documented records. I can only present some observations.

As a youngster I often fished around the mouth of the Huon River and Cygnet estuary. There was then an abundance of fish and included a myriad of species. Many of these no longer appear in our waters and if they do, are in very limited supply, small in size and not worth trying to catch. The schools of fish such as Australian salmon (cocky salmon) and barracouta, are long gone. Pods of dolphins and larger hunting fish rarely venture into our waters. One Southern right whale returned to calve in recent years. Without the industrial deterrents in the waterway more would do so.

It is clear that the increased nutrient levels, emanating from the industrial Atlantic salmon operations and evidenced by the explosion of 'sea lettuce' and the black slime often seen on the foreshore, has changed the ecology of the river.

In days gone by we would collect and eat the native oysters and mussels. Now the 'algal blooms' which appear on a regular basis, primarily occurring as a result of increased nutrient levels brought about by the large amount of Atlantic salmon farms and warming waters, are unsafe to eat for much of the time.

The explosion of fish farm pens in our waterways is a visual eyesore and a hazard to recreational boaters. There is no social licence for this corporate takeover of our public amenity. The 'quiet Australians' put up with it being swayed by a well-funded propaganda campaign by the fishing companies all based on local jobs and a boom for the local economy. This, when the reality is all about company profits, puts no value of environmental costs or lifestyle compromises for us residents who receive no benefit only loss.

The industrial noise emanating from these 24-hour, 7-day, 52-week operations is a horrible injustice for those of us living in their wake. Again in the middle of the night just last night my partner woke saying 'what's that noise?', I answered simply "Fish farm"!

Over the years I, both as an individual and as part of a collective Coastcare group, have collected truck loads - no exaggeration - of pipes, buoys, ropes and other fish farm garbage that has clearly come from the local fish farm operations. Bigger items

have been collected following storm events but the rest has become the responsibility of the local community. Not only is this an eyesore and environmental hazard but a safety hazard for boating enthusiasts.

The ever-present night lights from these operations have destroyed the night sky that we once enjoyed.

As I said I am not a diver but local knowledge shared by those who are, tell of the 'dead' sea floor all around the locations of the licensed areas.

It is clear that the corporate influence of the Atlantic fish farm fraternity on government policy has meant a cosy ride without adequate environmental or social restraint for this industry. It is definitely not sustainable despite the hooah espoused by their spokespeople. A gradual transition to land based operations (on private holdings, not in the public waterway) is not only a better option, but an essential necessity.



Paul Thomas



I attach some evidence photos.











