

29 November 2019

ATT: Mr Stuart Wright  
Inquiry Secretary  
Parliament House, HOBART, 7000

[finfish@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:finfish@parliament.tas.gov.au)

### **FinFish Farming in Tasmania Inquiry**

In reference to:

3) Any other matter incidental thereto.

The Tasman Peninsula is home to the World Heritage listed Port Arthur Historical Site, the Tasman National Park, the world class Three Capes Track and the award winning NRMA Port Arthur Caravan and Holiday Park. These significant tourist sites and award winning eco businesses now sit close to the home of 14 finfish pens that were re-established after more than 10 years of being absent in the area.

After extensive travel throughout more than 60 countries I returned to Tasmania in late 2011 where I was introduced to Stingaree and Long Bays. These Bays are situated 10km north of the mouth to the Tasman Sea and front my husband's family property who have lived there for 6 generations now.

Having dived in the clear and pristinely clean waters of The Galapagos and Easter Island only months earlier, I was mesmerised by the cleanliness and clarity of the water right here on my doorstep. I didn't have to dive in to see the beauty of what was below the surface; below me were parrot fish, stingrays and fingerlings swimming amongst swaying seagrass beds and various seaweeds.

In February 2014 my husband proposed to me on the shore of Stingaree Bay. We were married in February 2017 and our wedding photos were also taken on the shore of Stingaree Bay. The bay holds many wonderful memories for us, our engagement and wedding, birthday celebrations and a place for reflection. Not once do we ever take this place for granted.

Long Bay and Stingaree Bay hold some very important seagrass meadows which provide a whole range of values to the bay (and to the region more broadly) e.g. water quality improvement, sediment stabilisation, fish habitat and nurseries and bird habitat.

Local residents and land owners have always held concern over the FinFish Farms in Long Bay since their introduction in 1986. On the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1992 an application was made to extend the operation of its original 5 hectares to a further 10 hectares. The permit was refused based on undertakings given in 1987 by the then Minister for Sea Fisheries (Mr R Groom MHA) (see Appendix 1). It was later overturned on appeal and the expansion went through. No surveys of native fish stocks and no environmental impact studies were carried out at the time. FinFish Farming continued in Long Bay until mid 2006 when it ceased.

In August 2017, TASSAL commenced FinFish Farming again and opened up 7 pens in Long Bay with a further 7 pens introduced at a later date. They had not farmed in this area since 2006 (pens had been removed from the site). One-on-one meetings were held with local tourism operators but

residents/land owners who sit directly in front of the pens were not afforded the courtesy of such consultations but were expected to find out through community meetings.

In just over a year of the pens returning to the bay you could see both Long and Stingaree Bays decline. What I observed was the water clarity not as pristine, white sandy sea beds were turning a mucky colour and seagrass beds were being smothered in algal blooms; rotting and collapsing. By February 2019 there was noticeable sludge appearing on the shoreline in an area that does not get flushed out (Long and Stingaree Bay are situated 10km up from the mouth of the Tasman Sea and do not see big tidal movements. The smaller, more sheltered Stingaree Bay sees even less flushing – refer Appendix 2). TASSAL was contacted and emergency monitoring was done but in the northern end of Long Bay, well away from the area we reported (refer Appendix 3)

Since February 2019 I have been in consultation with TASSAL regarding the state of the bays. Additional monitoring has been requested; which they have agreed to do, but still not at the areas that we are concerned with. I kayak Long and Stingaree Bays regularly and the areas that they monitor do not appear to be suffering the same ill effects as other parts of the bays.

Algal Blooms and nuisance seaweeds continue to dominate the bays until present day (refer Appendix 4) and I have implored with the EPA to come and investigate. When I first contacted the EPA back in April I was advised the following:

*EPA does not currently undertake monitoring at Port Arthur and has no plans to commence EPA monitoring in the area. Under the current regulatory framework, aquaculture operators or consultants engaged by operators are required to undertake monitoring activities associated with fish farming activities (see Appendix 5).*

I recently contacted the EPA again to express my concerns (11 Nov 2019) and in this month alone there has been a total of 5 reports to the EPA about the state of Long and Stingaree Bays with escalating algal blooms that have been witnessed in the past 3 months.

2020 will see the arrival of the Well Boat (Aquaspa) into Long Bay. Concerns by community members on how, and most importantly where, the water will be disposed of are still unanswered.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- I strongly support a moratorium into FinFish Farming expansion until more science has been invested into the industry
- Existing leases not used within 2 years to go through same requirements as new leases
- Investigations and modelling should be undertaken to determine carrying capacity
- Transparency to land owners and community members
- Science based decision making from an independent panel
- Effective enforcements
- Accountable processes
- Heavily regulated

For our Marine Environment to be able to fight climate change we need to ensure that our waterways are healthy. FinFish Farming contributes largely to stress in our waterways.

Regards

Fiona Housego

Appendix 1



Office of the Minister for Sea Fisheries  
Hobart, Tasmania

24 AUG 1987

Mr. R. Fickett,  
Chairman,  
Save Long Bay Community Association,  
111 Gordon Hill Road,  
LINDISFARNE. 7015

Dear Mr. Fickett,

I refer to your letter of the 19th July concerning the marine farm at Oakwood. I am enclosing a diagram of the area covered by the permit which I trust will be of assistance to your Association.

The matters you raise were of course covered in the discussions you had with the Premier and myself on the 17th July and I wish to confirm that the present marine permit in Long Bay will not be further extended and there will be no additional marine farm permits authorized for the Bay. In giving this letter undertaking I wish to point out that it is the right of every person to make an application for a marine farm lease or permit and should the application be refused then the applicant has the opportunity to have my decision reviewed by a Magistrate and should the Magistrate uphold the appeal he can instruct me to issue a lease or permit.

The right to operate a marine farm in Long Bay is confined to the area specified in the permit, the farmer has no authority to conduct marine farming outside his permit. Any decision to allow the farmer to construct or maintain equipment at or near the public launching ramp, or elsewhere, is not a decision for me under the Fisheries Act. It is properly a decision of the Tasman Council. It is unfortunate that your letter arrived too late for a Departmental representative to attend your meeting on the 1st August.

In conclusion I wish to reassure you that Mr. Barclay has received the same service as any person seeking to establish a marine farm, he has not received any special attention and will be required to comply with the provisions of his permit and the Fisheries Act and Regulations.

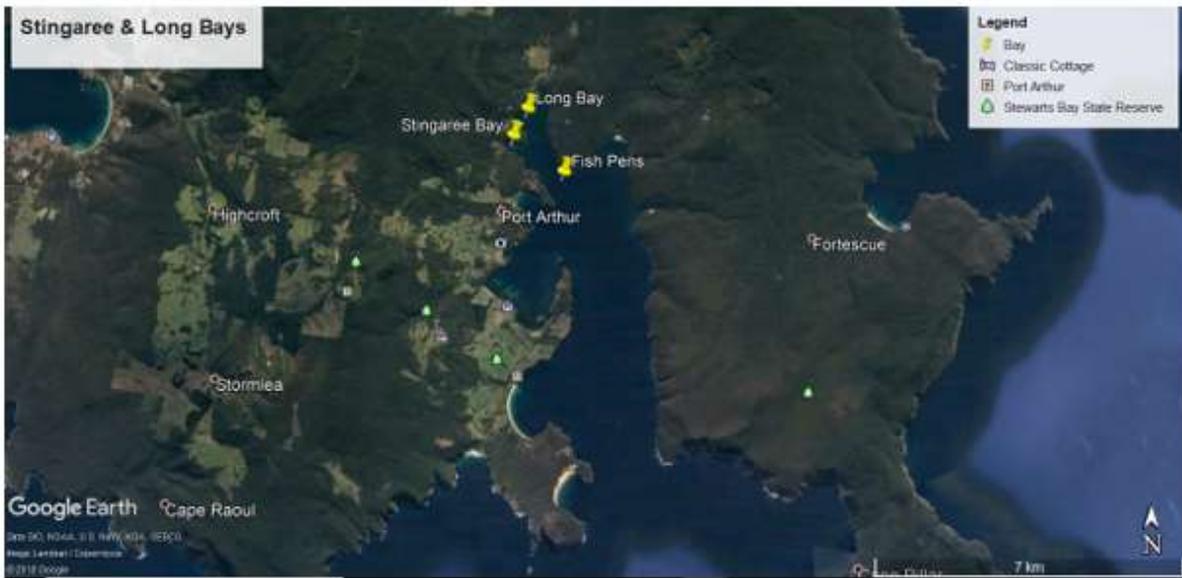
Yours sincerely,

*Ray Grace*  
(Ray Grace)  
MINISTER

Executive Buildings, Franklin Square, Hobart 7000

Telephone (002) 30 8011—Telex: Tasmania 28155

**Appendix 2 – Map showing distance to open sea waters**



**Appendix 3 – Map outlining area of concern in the corner of Stingaree Bay and where actual monitoring was done.**



Appendix 4



**Appendix 5** – Email from EPA stating they have no plans in monitoring in the area and that aquaculture operators are required to organise their own monitoring. TASSALS annual reports for both 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 that can be accessed via this link on the EPA website and show that monitoring done in Port Arthur are ALL done from the fish pens and further south. NO monitoring was done to the north of the pens where we raised our concerns.

<https://epa.tas.gov.au/regulation/salmon-aquaculture/tasman-peninsula-and-norfolk-bay/tasman-peninsula>

