

GAA/FIN 140

Catherine Nicholson

29 November 2019

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

Dear Mr Wright

I have worked in the area of land use planning and assessment and environmental management for over 30 years and am aware that the interface between land based marine activities and their marine based components is a challenging area to manage. Tassie has some great success stories in this space. One such success story has been the Derwent Estuary Program, where key managers, scientists and users of the marine environment have come together over many years and in a very open and transparent way, have run studies, projects and community activities to look after this waterway.

So when the key scientist (recently retired from this program) speaks out and recommends the need to really do some further baseline studies across a range of criteria before massively increasing fish farm activity in places like Storm Bay I take note and respect her advice. I ask the inquiry to do the same.

Adaptive management sounds like a reasonable thing to do and to some degree it always happens but another way of saying it is 'lets just suck it and see.' This is not good enough. Look what happened in Macquarie Harbour. We didn't have good enough baseline studies to understand what was going on with the environment, nor did we have robust enough processes to intervene before real damage was done. The need to increase fish biomass and increase profits overrode everything else. Every company needs to make a profit but not at the continual expense of the natural environment and the community enjoyment of public waters.

Lets learn the lesson from Macquarie Harbour. Before any increases in marine farming activities occur we absolutely need to ensure we understand that particular marine environment, have much stronger and TRANSPARENT regulatory processes and feedback systems in place and apply some precautionary principles, not jump in automatically with licences that allow massive increases in fish production. We should also be moving more towards shore based production as is happening in many countries, where waste can be collected and treated rather than creating dead zones under pens, polluting beaches, creating marine hazards and increasingly becoming visual eyesores in our public marine environments.

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

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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

Catherine Nicholson