

Will Joscelyne  
Marine Farming Planning Authority  
c/-Marine Farming Branch  
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment  
GPO Box 44  
Hobart TAS 7001

Dear Mr Joscelyne,

## **Expansion of marine farms in Macquarie Harbour**

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposal by Tassal Operations Pty Ltd, Huon Aquaculture Group Pty Ltd and Petuna Aquaculture Pty Ltd to expand their marine farming activities in Macquarie Harbour, as set out in the draft amendment to the *Macquarie Harbour Marine Farming Development Plan 2005 No 1* (the **draft amendment**).

The area of Macquarie Harbour to be converted to fish farms is within the Southwest Conservation Area and adjoins the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This iconic area, which attracts over 100,000 tourists annually, is recognised for its wilderness setting, ecological values, heritage significance and varied recreational opportunities. Sustainable management of these assets is important, however as it stands, I do not believe that the proposed expansion will be sustainable, and therefore that it should be refused.

### **Need for more baseline data**

There is currently a lack of baseline data for Macquarie Harbour as very few ecological studies have been conducted. Without more detailed information regarding water flows, ecological condition and the susceptibility of endangered species to changed nutrient conditions, there is not enough evidence to prove that the proposed expansion will not have significant environmental impacts.

Given the ecological and tourism significance of Macquarie Harbour, it is critical to any proper assessment that there is sufficient information available regarding potential impacts before the proposed expansion goes ahead. It is not good enough to require information to be gathered over time after the expansion has been approved.

### **Ecological impacts**

Macquarie Harbour is a rare, highly-stratified estuarine ecosystem that supports unique marine life. In particular, Macquarie Harbour is one of only two known habitats for the endangered Maugean Skate (*Zearaja maugeana*). Very little is currently known about this unique species and what impact reduced or fragmented habitat, changed nutrient levels or disturbance of sediments may have on its survival. There is not enough evidence to show that there will not be a significant impact on this species on the basis of information provided in the EIS.

The proposed marine farming expansion will elevate nutrient levels and reduce dissolved oxygen, which may have adverse impacts on farmed and wild fish, other aquatic species and the environment.

The marine farming expansion, and the proposal to increase fish stock densities, increases the risk of salmon escaping into the surrounding environment. Competition between escaped salmon and native species will have adverse impacts on biodiversity in Macquarie Harbour and waterways with the World Heritage Area.

### **Social and cultural impacts**

The impacts of the proposed expansion associated with noise and odour emissions, lighting, significant increase in the area of infrastructure and netting, marine debris and additional boat traffic will detract from the wilderness experience.

The proposal will also reduce the area of Macquarie Harbour available for kayaking, sailing and recreational fishing, and detract from the amenity enjoyed by people engaging in those activities.

### **Planning issues**

The *Marine Farming Planning Act 1995* privileges marine farming activities and does not provide a good framework to consider amenity issues, noise pollution or complex ecological impacts. Even where the Panel assesses these

issues and recommends refusal, the Minister may still approve the proposed expansion. I am concerned that this legislation does not provide a transparent, evidence based assessment approach.

The draft amendment also proposes to increase fish stock densities above the current maximum, and to allow those densities to be altered by DPIPWE in future. I urge the Panel to reject the draft amendment, which will allow decisions regarding density and biomass (which impact on nutrients and fish health) to be made without public consultation or expert appraisal.

**Other reasons** [*include any additional issues you would like to address*]

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For all the reasons discussed above, I urge the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel to recommend that the draft amendment to the *Macquarie Harbour Marine Farming Development Plan 2005 No 1* be refused.

Yours sincerely,

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Email:**

**Date:**