

12 November 2018

Barbara Nowak

Louise Cherrie

The Honourable Guy Barnett LLM MP  
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Dear Minister,

We were members of the Marine Farming Review Panel from January to August 2018. We tendered our joint resignation as we did not believe that we could contribute in a meaningful way to the performance or the general functions of the Panel under Section 9 of the *Marine Farming Planning Act 1995*, and that the panel was not serving the best interests of the State. We offered to provide further information on our reasons for resignation, but so far we have not received a response from your Department. We are writing to you to ensure that you understand the reasons for our resignations from the Marine Farming Review Panel. Our resignations were due to frustration with the process, including the Act.

We are both supportive of a sustainable salmon industry and have no affiliations with, nor biases against any operators, political parties or government departments. Our appointment to the Panel was, we were lead to believe, intended to ensure rigour in the review of proposed developments and to provide the Minister with sound, objective, and scientifically based advice. A number of factors prevented this. The Panel is, as currently structured and within the confines of the legislation, inherently compromised. As professionals in our fields of expertise we decline to be associated with such. We would certainly have been happy to continue had we been able to apply current best practice and the lessons from Macquarie Harbour. Our ability to do this was hindered by the structure of the legislation, the absence of base information upon which to provide advice, and the functioning of the Panel that showed an undue propensity to support what is operationally convenient for the aquaculture industry.

Our joint resignation was not a decision we took lightly and was tendered only after unsuccessful attempts to resolve these issues. For clarity, the reasons for our resignation relate to the gaps that hindered our ability to give advice on expansion in Storm Bay. Specifically:

- there is no detailed biogeochemical model upon which to determine carrying capacity and nutrient transfer with the lower Derwent Estuary;
- there is no Government endorsed biosecurity plan (although noting that the industry is currently developing this);
- there is no regulatory guideline to define the standards to which we should hold operators;

- the adaptive management strategy, as proposed in public documentation, did not provide the assurance required and, the gathering of additional information for due diligence proved difficult; and
- the natural values for Storm Bay have not been mapped and considered, and we include in this the amenity owed to communities.

These deficiencies are known and long standing and should have been resolved before the approval to apply for the amendments. We entered an assessment process that was well advanced and our questions and discussions in relation to the deficiencies were inconvenient and unwelcome.

To be clear, we have seen a number of improvements in the regulatory and operational space over the past two years. We would like to see this good work continue, and for the Tasmanian community to prosper. With sound science, strong regulatory oversight, and increased transparency, the industry can sustainably develop within the capacity of the receiving environment to attenuate impacts and with the support, or at least tolerance, of the community. As it stands these things are at threat.

As already offered in our letter of resignation, we will be happy to provide further information or discuss those issues.

Sincerely,



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Cc

John Whittington, Secretary to the Minister, DPIPW

Carole Rodger, Deputy Secretary, DPIPW

Wes Ford, Deputy Secretary EPA Tasmania, Director EPA

Dr Ian Dutton, Director (Marine Resources), DPIPW

Graham Woods, Manager (Marine Farming Branch), DPIPW

John Adams, Principal Management and Planning Officer (Marine Farming), DPIPW

Craig Midgeley, Chair, Marine Farming Planning Review Panel