

Cleaning up Fish Farming



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Tasmania's spectacular marine environment is shared common wealth. The Greens will protect our harbours, bays and channels for all Tasmanians.

Tasmanian salmon farming is operating at an industrial scale. What began as a few small businesses has grown into three large corporations that plan to double in size.

Both Labor and the Liberals have allowed the industry to write its own rules and expansion plans.

The consequence has been disastrous – a legacy of water pollution from thousands of tonnes of fish faeces, noise and light pollution, waterway congestion from large fish pens, degradation of local fisheries, seal 'relocations', collapsing ecosystems, the ruination of marine scenery and Tasmania's clean green brand.

A massive industry expansion is underway along the East Coast, the North West and the South East.

Coastal communities, conservationists, surfers, recreational fishers, tourism and fishing businesses who share our waters have been told - not asked - where fish farms will go.

The Greens will protect our fragile marine environment and ensure everyone has a say if, where, and how salmon farming should operate in public waters around the State.

We will return power given to industry to the hands of the Tasmanian people.

THE GREENS WILL

- ▲ Put in place a moratorium on fish farm expansion, until we get the laws right
- ▲ Protect the marine environment by:
 - ▲ Introducing bioregional plans and environmental regulations, enforced through a rigid environmental license
 - ▲ Prohibiting seal relocations
 - ▲ Enforcing penalties for fish farm license breaches
 - ▲ Reviewing biosecurity laws
- ▲ Make public waterways for everyone by:
 - ▲ Extending municipal boundaries to cover State Waters and creating a new State Waters Zone
 - ▲ Removing exemption on fish farms paying council rates
 - ▲ Strengthening laws prohibiting marine debris

MORATORIUM ON FISH FARM EXPANSION

A plastic curtain of fish farm pens is planned for Storm Bay - from Nubeena to Betsey Island and down northeast Bruny. This is a sea grab of over 19 million square metres of public waters.

The three salmon companies propose to produce 80 million kilograms of salmon in Storm Bay each year. Last year, the state-wide production was 50 million kgs.

In addition to the plans for Storm Bay, expansion plans are already underway at Okehampton Bay, Port Arthur, King Island and Circular Head.

Fish farm activities in Macquarie Harbour, the Huon River and D'Entrecasteaux Channel have severely damaged those unique marine environments and threaten the survival of marine life living there. Fish farm debris is an ongoing serious risk to boaters, and pollutes shorelines, and noise and light from farming disturb coastal communities.

The environmental and social impacts also damage other businesses that rely on our public waterways, including shellfish farmers, commercial fishers and tourism operators.

The impacts of inshore fish farming on the environment, coastal communities, and other businesses have caused growing community unrest as the industry expands.

The current rules governing fish farming have been written by the industry, for the industry. Companies' own expansion plans have been given the force of law. The laws fail to protect shared waterways, and they exclude others from having a say.

The Greens will institute **a moratorium on all fish farm expansion**, until regulations have been established that protect the marine environment and give the public a voice about shared waterway use.

PROTECT THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Land-based, and far offshore, is world's best practice for the location of fish farming. Fish farm locations must be based on independent scientific criteria and community input. The environmental issues that have dogged salmon farming in shallow, warm and poorly flushed bays, channels and harbours must be addressed.

The Greens will ensure the location and operations of fish farms are established within **bioregional plans**, created for all Tasmanian State Waters. The bioregional plans will replace Marine Farming Development Plans.

The bioregional plans would inform the management of our shared waterways for all users, and protect recreational fishers and commercial fisheries, tourism operators, boaters, surfers and others, as well as conservation values.

They will be developed with full community consultation, based on current scientific evidence on best practice for fish farm siting and operation.

The Greens will also create **environmental regulations** that stipulate maximum water temperatures and waste emissions, minimum water depth and current speeds, and other environmental standards for marine-based fish farming.

New leases will only be granted in locations that comply with regulations, and when a lease for an existing operational farm on a non-compliant site lapses, it would not be renewed.

Whether a proposed fish farm site complies with the bioregional plans and environmental regulations would be tested when a company applies for an **Environmental Licence**.

The Greens will require Environmental Licences to be issued by the independent EPA Board, subject to public consultation and third party rights of appeal.

The Greens will encourage companies to move operations on land or far offshore more quickly, by creating a **license fee incentive**. Compliant land-based or permitted offshore fish farm operations would pay lower fees. The fees will reflect the cost inshore fish farms are inflicting on the marine environment and other users of Tasmania's public waterways.

The Greens will **increase the capacity of the EPA** to monitor lease and licence condition compliance, and to conduct enforcement proceedings for breaches, funded through an industry levy. Penalties would be established for breaches of licence conditions, and would appropriately reflect the severity of the breach.

The Greens will **prohibit seal relocations**. If existing seal-proof pen infrastructure at a site is inadequate for providing a safe work environment, the fish farm company will need to cease operations at the site until it has installed suitable seal proof infrastructure.

The Greens will also instruct DPIPWE to **review Tasmania's biosecurity laws** to ensure adequate protection exists for the marine environment and all public waterway users. Biosecurity laws will consider the impact of introduced aquatic pests and diseases on biodiversity, health, amenity and economic stability.

PUBLIC WATERWAYS FOR EVERYONE

Everyone who uses public waters should be able to have a say about the location of future fish farms. Currently, fish farm developments are exempt from assessment within the Tasmanian Planning System. The power to approve new fish farms, and expansion of activities at existing sites, rests entirely with the Minister for Primary Industries.

There is no independent oversight by the Tasmanian Planning Commission or local councils about the social impact of salmon farm developments, and no formal public consultation or right to appeal the Minister's decisions.

The Greens will **move the assessment process for fish farm developments into the Tasmanian Planning System**.

We will **extend municipal boundaries** to include state waters. We will also introduce a **new State Water Zone** that ensures fish farm developments do not unduly impact on other recreational and commercial users of the waterway, or coastal communities. All aquaculture developments within the zone will be discretionary.

New fish farm developments will be subject to the same consultation and appeal rights as all other farming operations. The planning process would be independent, and at arm's length from the Minister.

Responsible fish farm companies should make a fair contribution to local communities, just like every other business - including land-based fish farms. We will remove the exemption on **paying council rates for fish farms** that currently exists.

We recognise fish farm debris poses a serious risk to boaters and pollutes shorelines. There has been no effective enforcement by the Liberals of existing marine safety and littering laws.

The Greens would legislate to **remove loopholes in existing marine debris laws**, and increase funding for MAST, and the EPA to enforce illegal marine debris pollution.