



Australian Government



Trade Training Centres
in Schools Program

On behalf of the Huon Valley Trade Training Centre I wish to make a submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry into the “Regulation of the fin-fish aquaculture industry in Tasmania.”

Background:

The Huon Valley Trade Training Centre was funded under the Australian Government’s Trade Training Centres in Schools Program and opened in 2012. Aquaculture is one of the industries on the HVTTC’s scope of training delivery and the first intake of students began in 2013. Enrolment profiles since that date have been:

	2013	2014	2015
Certificate I in Aquaculture	10 students	12 students	17 students
Certificate II in Aquaculture	0 students	12 students	15 students

Training is delivered under a Partnering Agreement with Seafood Training Tasmania and is supported by industry including Tassal Group Ltd, Huon Aquaculture Company, Petuna, and Skretting.

The HVTTC operates its own fresh-water salmon hatchery and holds a full commercial fish-farm license issued by Inland Fisheries Tasmania.

Ten graduate students from HVTTC Aquaculture training courses have gained employment in the Tasmanian Salmon Industry.

This submission will address terms of reference b), c), e), and f) from the inquiry.

B. The impact on waterway health, including to threatened and endangered species.

The marine finfish farming in Tasmania is regulated by the Tasmanian Government and administered by the Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment. Regional Marine Farming Development Plans determine which areas are suitable for farming. Extensive public and stakeholder consultation and rigorous environmental research is conducted before a regional Marine Farm Development Plan is signed-off. Within each region marine farming is restricted to designated Marine Farm Zones, within which are allocated Marine Farm Leases. This system allows for the leaseholder to move sea-cage operations to various locations within the zone, following previous farming areas, which permits environmental recovery of the sea bed. Aquaculture Stewardship Council standards, to which Tassal Group Ltd is certified, mandates fallowing periods. Research from IMAS and UTAS indicates that left to fallow, an area subject to marine farming will return to environmental base levels after periods of between 3 months to one year.

The main native threatened or endangered species affected by marine farming in Tasmania are pinnipeds (Australian Fur Seals and Sea Lions) and various bird species. These species are attracted to marine farms as the location of an easy food source. It is in the best interest of marine farm operators to minimise interactions between these native species and the farmed stock. Huon Aquaculture in particular is investing many millions of dollars in the roll-out of new “fortress pens” to prevent access by birds and seals to the farmed salmon while in turn minimising impacts on seals and birds. Bird nets are designed not to entrap birds, while seal exclusion nets prevent seals from accessing the salmon, and in turn suffering stressful relocation procedures.



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The marine finfish farming sector in Tasmania works to prevent any escapes of farmed stock in order to minimise economic losses as much as the impact on the natural environment. Contrast this with Tasmania's "wild" trout fishery, where a State Government agency, Inland Fisheries Tasmania which actively releases non-native salmonid species into natural waterways for recreational fishing, doing untold damage to threatened and endangered native freshwater fish species.

As a training organisation preparing young people for entry into the aquaculture industry the HVTTC takes its responsibilities to waterway health and biosecurity extremely seriously. Students are trained extensively in the concepts of environmental sustainability, well beyond what is required by the Seafood Industry Training Package at Certificates I and II level. Our biosecurity procedures are unique in that our primary concern is not the introduction of pathogens into our salmon hatchery, rather than the prevention of any pathogen escape, or other environmental impact upon the Huon River and the aquaculture industry which depends upon its pristine waters.

C. The adequacy of current environmental planning and regulatory mechanisms

In its technical paper, "*Comparison of the international regulations and best management practices for marine finfish farming, (2013)*" the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industry states that in comparison with New Zealand, "Tasmania has extensive environmental monitoring and compliance requirements for finfish farms." Nevertheless, each of the three major salmon aquaculture companies in Tasmania, Tassal Group Ltd, Huon Aquaculture Company and Petuna have each pursued third-party Best Management Practice certification in addition to compliance with government regulation. Huon Aquaculture has been certified by Global GAP, Petuna by the Global Aquaculture Alliance Best aquaculture Practice, and Tassal Group Ltd with GAA BAP and Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification for all its marine farming sites. Tassal is the only company in the world to have achieved this level of ASC certification.

Pursuit of third-party BMP certification is not an acceptance by industry that the existing government planning and regulatory mechanisms are deficient, rather an indication of the industry's commitment to environmental best practice goes beyond merely what they are legally required to do.

The Huon Valley Trade Training Centre works with major salmon companies and external certification bodies to ensure our students are cognisant with the concept of environmental regulation and quality systems. Staff from Petuna and from the Global Aquaculture Alliance have presented training sessions for HVTTC students about the need for such regulation and certification.

E. The economic impacts and employment profile of the industry.

The Tasmanian finfish aquaculture industry currently comprises about 90% of Tasmania's total seafood production. The salmonid industry is predicted to increase in value to \$1B within the next ten years. Employment in the industry has also grown significantly. When the HVTTC Aquaculture Coordinator first began training in this industry the Huon Aquaculture Company employed less than 20 people. That company now employs over 500 employees, four of whom are students of the HVTTC training program. Tassal Group Ltd employs approximately 950 people, six of whom are students from the HVTTC. In response to the expansion of the industry the Skills Tasmania and the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council developed the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Workforce Development Plan. This plan is unique in that it enshrines a role for school-based training such as that at the HVTTC, recognising the crucial role in developing young people for employment in the growing industry. The salmon industry in Tasmania is one of the very few which is increasing its workforce, and for a state where youth unemployment is over 25% this is a huge opportunity for developing the careers of our young people, particularly in regional areas such as the Huon Valley. This is why the Tassal and Huon Aquaculture take a proactive role in



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working with the HVTTC to develop their future workforce leaders. The companies sit on the board of the HVTTC, assist with the selection and induction of the students into the program, and provide ongoing technical support, training opportunities, site visits, and work-placement opportunities for the students. The Tasmanian Salmon industry is an advanced technological industry. It requires highly skilled and knowledgeable employees compared to old industry such as resource extraction which requires a fundamental change to employment profile of Huon Valley; hence the need for training and in particular investing in youth as future leaders. The salmon companies and the HVTTC have worked in partnership to develop a work-force development model around Australian School-based Apprenticeships. In its first year of operation this has been taken up by 6 students, providing them with work and training while at school, assisting with retention, and guaranteed employment at the end of Year 12, with support for tertiary studies as required. The Salmon Industry ASbA Project has become a model for industries in Tasmania and will be implemented by the Hospitality industry in 2015-16. When presented to the Asia-Pacific Aquaculture Conference in Vietnam in 2013, it was acknowledged that no similar model of school-industry partnership around workforce development exists in the Asia-Pacific or North American regions.

In summary, the Tasmanian salmon industry is vital to the employment future of Tasmania's young people, particularly in regional areas, and is an internationally recognised model of industry and school partnerships.

F. Any other relevant matters

The Huon Valley Trade Training Centre is a founding member of the Aquaculture Without Frontiers Global Schools and Students Network. AwF is an international independent not-for-profit organisation that supports sustainable aquaculture in the alleviation of poverty by improving livelihoods in developing countries. In 2014 the HVTTC hosted and organised an awareness raising dinner for AwF which was attended by over 50 people, raising approximately \$3000 for AwF. The event was supported by all three salmon aquaculture companies, together with oyster, mussel, and abalone aquaculture companies which donated product and expertise. Above all it was an indication of how lucky we are in Tasmania to have an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable aquaculture industry such that is in a position to support communities in areas in the rest of the world where this is not the case.

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In partnership with:

