

Regulation of the Fin-fish industry in Tasmania

Tasmanian Regional NRM Submission; on behalf of Cradle Coast NRM, NRM North and NRM South, May 2015

Natural Resource Management (NRM) has been developed in Australia over several decades through a number of community and government initiatives. The term natural resources refer to a broad spectrum of “environmental assets” including plants, animals, water and soils. These assets are not isolated but linked natural systems and natural resource management is concerned with integrating the management of these assets with social, economic and environmental values, and involving community and industry in planning and decision making.

There are currently three recognised NRM Regions in Tasmania, NRM North, NRM South and Cradle Coast NRM. As regional NRM organisations we have a significant interest in the social, environmental and economic impacts of fin-fish aquaculture in Tasmania, which operates at various locations across the State. Noting the broad spectrum of NRM activities we undertake it is not the intent of this submission to cover all areas of their operations, but instead to focus on the area where we have had the greatest direct engagement with the fin-fish aquaculture industry, around the areas of community engagement and social license. Specifically our submission would relate to sections “e” and “f” in the Terms of Reference.

The role and activities of Regional NRM have evolved since our inception in 2002, under the terms of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Act 2002. Over this period we have had increasing engagement with the industry across a range of issues, including on ground projects on marine debris clean up and control, through to awareness and education activities around the aquaculture industry. These latter activities have included presentations and briefings, site visits, facilitated communications and more detailed and technical discussions with key stakeholders when requested. It is anticipated that on current trends these activities will increase and expand in future.

As our relationship with the industry has evolved and expanded, we have moved to a situation where we are now prepared to facilitate and enter into more complex and sensitive discussions with the industry to address more complex and longer term issues. Such progress is not without business risk (to all parties) and would not have been possible without an appropriate level of trust being established. This has been achieved by maintaining an open and frank relationship with the industry and its constituent companies over the longer term, during which time we have consistently and promptly been provided with any information and answers to our questions when requested. In one case this has evolved to a more proactive relationship where we are often advised in advance of potential issues or problems and what the response or potential solutions being considered might be.

We would note that a key driver of these relationships has been the moves by the industry to demonstrate and improve sustainability. While companies within the industry all appear to be undertaking measures to address this, the work of Tassal in particular to achieve Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification and the associated transparency, has helped to highlight a number of opportunities to engage with NRM Regions and broaden the social impact of their company and the industry. Recent examples include NRM South’s engagement with and investment into a key

stakeholder (including the salmonid industry) based collaboration via the D'Entrecasteaux and Huon Collaboration initiative, and work with Cradle Coast NRM to develop relationships with specific groups within our community.

While there are significant regulatory and commercial reasons to progress sustainability measures in the fin-fish industry there is also increasing recognition across the corporate world that those businesses which are embarking on such a journey are anecdotally more likely to be viable and profitable. This is notable in the community and social context for the future of our State and our regional areas. Also, and despite the challenges, the effort and genuine engagement by the fin-fish industry have the potential to demonstrate the way forward for other primary industry sectors in future.

In summarising this submission we would note the genuine and proactive manner in which the industry has engaged with Regional NRM organisations, and the significant effort of the constituent organisations to build a sustainable industry committed to ongoing improvement and community engagement.

Submitted on behalf of Cradle Coast NRM, NRM North and NRM South by;

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