**ABC response from Tassal**

**Okehampton Bay**

The Okehampton Bay lease is about seven kilometres from Spring Beach and more than eight kilometres from Maria Island.

Finfish aquaculture in Okehampton Bay was initially proposed 19-years-ago by the Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment under the draft Great Oyster Bay and Mercury Passage Marine Farming Development Plan. This draft MFDP was subsequently approved in 1998 and reviewed in 2007.

Importantly, the Okehampton lease has been a working marine farm for more than a decade. Mussels are grown on the site, and at present there are 20 hectares of lines containing mussels with boats and staff out on the water every day.

The first baseline environmental assessment for the fin fish lease was conducted in 2000, but Tassal has completed its own monthly monitoring program since 2014.  This is in addition to monitoring and baseline studies undertaken by Tassal’s partner in the project, Spring Bay Seafoods.

Although Okehampton Bay is zoned for fish farming and extensive studies support salmon farming, the Tasmanian Government requested that further assessments of the environmental impacts of salmon farming at Okehampton be undertaken by the independent Marine Farm Planning Review Panel.  Salmon farming operations within it will be strictly monitored by EPA Tasmania.  Tassal will comply with all conditions in the independent panel’s report regarding its plans to develop a fish farm at Okehampton Bay.

The Okehampton farm is an 80-hectare lease and will eventually be home to 28 pens.  Pens will be progressively rolled out.  In 2017, Tassal expects to have 12 pens in the water.  Tassal would like to introduce smolt in August this year.

Tassal has 100 per cent compliance with State regulations for all its 15 lease sites in South and South-East Tasmania. The Okehampton lease has similar environmental, including water temperature, attributes to Tassal’s Cresses Lease which has operated in full compliance for seven years.

Temperature profiles between August 2014 and August 2016 recorded a minimum temperature of 10.3 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 19.59 degrees Celsius.  The longest period of water greater than 18 degrees Celsius was 88 days between 31 December 2015 and 31 March 2016 which coincided with one of the hottest summers on record in Tasmania.  These temperature profiles provide Tassal with a good understanding of the environment in which we plan to operate.

Tasmania is a proud maritime community and balancing recreational and operational needs in regional areas is something we do exceptionally well. It is important for the environment, for the community and the economy.

There is very strong support for the salmon farm to proceed with Triabunna locals in a majority favour for the project. For a small town, 125 local people turned out for a jobs option. Of that, more than half applied and the team is shaping up to be a strong local outfit. This is exceptionally important to Triabunna, which has experienced devastating economic loss following the demise of the forestry industry. Many families have fly in, fly out partners, and the opportunity to work locally where they grew up, went to school and live is very exciting for them.

Aquaculture in Tasmania has a unique jobs-multiplier effect, because everything from the feed, to science, manufacturing to operations, processing and supply chain are conducted within the state. Industry sustainability is vital and where Tassal operations exist, social and economic benefits are flowing through other sectors including tourism, hospitality, housing and education.

Tassal environmental credentials are demonstrated through its certification of all farming regions to the Aquaculture Stewardship Council – the first company in the world to reach this standard. ASC requirements are the most rigorous environmental and social standards available – and offer high level standards relating to transparency to the public, environmental monitoring practices and independence of audit. They are a consumer’s greatest guarantee of sustainable product sourcing.

We know the world is watching us, our industry peers are watching us and that is why our plans for Okehampton Bay will set this site apart to be a global prototype. It will be our flagship site and that means incredible opportunities for the community, for industry, for tourism, hospitality, science and research.

**Addressing land based farming**

Land based farming involves the production of fish utilising a range of technologies and operating environments, from ocean to land based production systems. Typically, the more closed a system is, the more complex it becomes through energy and waste requirements, heightened biosecurity risks and fish welfare issues.  There is only a very low use of successful land based salmon farming globally, current production capacity stands at approximately 0.25 per cent of global salmon production.  Land based salmon farming is an area Tassal has explored and has made investments into partial land based farming of salmon, utilising world-leading water re-use technology and is continually exploring global sustainable salmon farming opportunities. Tassal is committed to continue exploring new innovations, such as land based farming and continuously improve our operations from an environmental and operations efficiency perspective, ensuring that we don’t compromise the environment or fish health and welfare.

Every site is different and needs to be evaluated on its own merits and farmed accordingly; Tassal has many oceanic, high energy sites as well as more protected, estuarine sites.   Tassal’s next site development will be very high energy conditions.

**Macquarie Harbour improvements**

Tassal’s sites in Macquarie Harbour are now indicating full compliance at the last survey and these results are currently being reviewed by the EPA.

We accept that our industry is not infallible, as the recent experience in Macquarie Harbour has highlighted. However, the non-stop rigorous processes of auditing and regular re-certification that comes with ASC accreditation provides a powerful independent framework within which problems can be identified and corrected, and better anticipated and avoided in the future.