

# **Submission – Objection to Seaweed Aquaculture Lease, Disaster Bay – Eden 1 (SSD-41680467)**

I object to the proposed kelp farm in Disaster Bay.

My connection to Wonboyn spans my lifetime, and now extends to my own young family. I have a home in Wonboyn & a deep personal connection to this landscape. It is not just somewhere I visit — it is part of my life, and part of what I value most about living in Australia. What makes this place extraordinary is not just its beauty, but its continuity — a rare coastal environment that has remained largely unchanged across generations. That continuity reflects not only environmental value, but deep cultural and historical significance that cannot be replaced once lost.

Only recently I saw reporting that NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service recorded a record 65.5 million visits to national parks in the past year — contributing over \$19 billion annually and supporting 62,000 jobs. That reinforces something simple: people are drawn to places like this because they remain unspoilt. Destroying that quality for industrial development is short-sighted and irreversible.

The broader implications of this proposal must also be considered. Nadgee is internationally valued for its untouched character and ecotourism appeal. Industrialising this landscape risks long-term damage to that reputation. It also sets a concerning precedent for further commercial development in one of the last remaining pristine coastal wilderness areas in the state.

This coastline also carries deep cultural and historical significance. It sits alongside the Nadgee Nature Reserve, the only declared coastal wilderness in New South Wales, and forms part of a much larger, living cultural landscape. This area has been occupied and cared for over thousands of years, evidenced by extensive Aboriginal middens along the coast. These sites reflect the enduring presence and custodianship of the Bidawal, Dtharwa, and Monaroo peoples, whose connection to this Country continues today. This is not just history — it is living heritage, a place of ongoing cultural responsibility.

Under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, Aboriginal objects and places are protected, recognising that their significance extends beyond isolated sites to the broader landscape and environmental systems that sustain them. In this context, the waters, beaches, and coastal processes of Disaster Bay are inseparable from the cultural integrity of Country. Disturbing these systems is not simply an environmental impact — it is a disruption to a living cultural landscape.

The scale of the proposed development is fundamentally inappropriate for this location. Expanding from a 50 x 50 metre trial site to a 200-hectare industrial operation introduces risks that cannot be reliably predicted or justified. The environmental conditions of Disaster Bay are highly dynamic and exposed, and there is insufficient evidence that small-scale trial data can be meaningfully applied to a project of this magnitude.

Disaster Bay itself reflects this reality. Its name originates from a history of shipwrecks on and near Green Cape, a direct result of extreme and unpredictable ocean conditions. These are not occasional events, but defining characteristics of the coastline. If the site cannot be safely accessed during these conditions, there is a real risk that operational pressures will shift to Wonboyn Lake — a small, low-impact community village with infrastructure that is not designed to support industrial-scale marine activity & commercial enterprises.

This leads directly to concerns about plastic pollution. A development of this scale relies on thousands of synthetic components exposed to constant wave action, UV degradation, and mechanical stress. In heavy seas, large numbers of buoys, ropes, and plastic components will inevitably break free. Where do they go? Into Nadgee. Into the remote beaches. Into the protected wilderness that is difficult to access and even harder to clean up. There is no clear, enforceable explanation of how this material would be recovered or even if it would be recovered, or who would be responsible when it inevitably disperses across kilometres of this pristine & protected coastline. The risk is not theoretical — it is predictable.

The proposed development would also have a significant visual impact. A 200-hectare grid of buoys, ropes, and infrastructure would fundamentally alter the character of this coastline, replacing a pristine, undeveloped seascape with an industrial presence. This directly conflicts with the area's value as a place of natural beauty, tranquility, and wilderness.

There are also serious ecological risks. The introduction of extensive ropes and infrastructure creates entanglement hazards for marine mammals including whales, dolphins, and seals, as well as seabirds. The use of large volumes of synthetic materials also raises concerns about microplastic pollution, with degradation over time contributing to contamination of the marine environment and food chain, eventually contaminating the pure waters of this pristine environment.

Noise and light pollution are additional impacts that have not been adequately addressed. Vessel activity, harvesting operations, and infrastructure movement in

turbulent conditions will generate both above and below-water noise & disturbance, which is known to disrupt marine species, particularly cetaceans. Artificial lighting from navigation buoys and servicing vessels will further impact both wildlife and the natural experience of the area.

The physical presence of the farm also risks damaging the fragile ocean floor through anchoring systems and shading effects, altering marine habitats. More broadly, the scale of the infrastructure has the potential to interfere with wave action across a large footprint, leading to unknown changes in sediment transport and coastal processes. This may affect the formation and stability of beaches, estuaries, and inlets, including the Wonboyn entrance and Merrica Inlet within the Nadgee wilderness.

These coastal environments also provide critical habitat for threatened shorebirds such as the Pied Oystercatcher, with fewer than 200 breeding pairs remaining in New South Wales. These birds rely on undisturbed beaches and estuarine systems to nest and feed, making them highly sensitive to changes in coastal processes, human disturbance, and habitat degradation. Increased activity, altered sediment movement, and environmental changes associated with this development pose a direct risk to their already fragile population.

There are also unresolved questions around long-term accountability. If the project were to fail or be abandoned, it is unclear what enforceable mechanisms exist to ensure full removal of infrastructure across a 200-hectare site. Without strong guarantees, there is a real risk of long-term environmental harm being left behind.

Finally, it is unclear what tangible benefit this project provides to the local community. There is limited evidence of meaningful local return, while the environmental, cultural, and social impacts will be borne locally.

At its core, this proposal is not simply about a kelp farm. It is about whether industrial-scale development is appropriate in a place defined by its wilderness, cultural significance, and ecological integrity.

This proposal risks setting a precedent. If industrial-scale development is allowed here, in one of the last intact protected coastal wilderness areas in the state, where does it stop?

This place is valuable because it has been protected — environmentally, culturally, and socially. It should not now be exposed to industrial risk.

For all of these reasons, I strongly object to this proposal.

