

Rachel Mitchell
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Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to oppose your proposal to site two aquaculture leases off Callala Beach, in Jervis Bay.

My family and I own one of the beach front properties on Callala Beach and I spend three months there every year with my six children. We are very active users of the beach and spend many hours daily swimming, kayaking, boating, running, walking, fishing and gazing out over Callala beach and its waters. As you may be aware, Callala beach has the most beach front properties of any beach in Jervis Bay, and is one of the closest beaches to Nowra, so often has large numbers of both local people and holiday makers enjoying its pristine waters and beachside areas. The attached image was taken at Callala Beach from the Community Centre on the October long weekend in 2013 and gives an indication of the number of people that use this location for recreation during the holiday periods. The Christmas holidays are busier. I was puzzled as to why the amenity value of these numerous recreational users of Callala Beach and the visual impact to the residents of the neighbouring properties were not listed in your constraints used for deciding where in Jervis Bay to site these leases. The proposed lease sites block off areas currently used frequently for kayaking, boating, and wake boarding. The 'moderate risk' of a decline in water quality and increase in potential diseases transmitted by this proposal is unacceptable to those swimming, fishing, and using the beach for recreational purposes. It is an unacceptable risk to me that my children may potentially get sick from swimming in the waters of Callala Beach due to the bi-products of these aquaculture leases. I similarly do not want to have concerns about eating the fish my husband catches off our beach or from our boat in the vicinity of the beach. And exchanging our view of a pristine bay for two lots of twenty hectare aquaculture leases with the possible three boat servicing visits per day is not acceptable to me either.



Picture: Callala Beach attracts many visitors each year.

Jervis Bay has national and international recognition as a pristine area of unique natural beauty that would be degraded by the operation of three substantial aquacultural leases within its boundaries. The beaches of Jervis Bay are acclaimed as having the whitest sand in the world. This reputation could easily be lost if beaches are fouled by waste products washed up from aquaculture leases, or the sedimentation caused by the operation of these leases. Jervis Bay is also recognised for its beautiful crystal clear water and abundant marine life. The EIS notes the need to both maintain present water quality and also keep water quality at a level safe for humans and marine life. I wish to point out that present water quality in Jervis Bay is well above that recognised as safe for human and marine life. With a 'moderate risk' of sedimentation and disease transmission, I strongly query whether the existing water quality can be maintained under this proposal. A negative impact on marine and its associated bird life is likely to result from the environmental degradation caused by the proposed aquaculture leases. Tourism would surely be affected negatively also.

The 'moderate risk' of species entanglement in the proposed aquaculture leases is very concerning to me. A humpback mother and calf were seen not far off Callala Beach in October 2013 and it is not unusual to have them swim in this area of the Bay. In the same period we similarly saw marine turtles swimming in Jervis Bay whilst we were boating. There are so few of these species left in the area, and any deaths caused by aquaculture entanglement is unnecessary and unacceptable. Many fairy penguins also make their way from Bowen Island to swim through the area of the proposed leases to the shallower waters of Callala Beach, which could easily become trapped in the aquaculture rope systems. The Bay is a safe haven for a significant number of endangered and threatened species, in a world where there are few such places remaining for these species to live in a pristine environment. A 'moderate risk' of disease transmission from the aquaculture leases will likely have negative ramifications through the food chain in the Bay, affecting a diversity of species. Approximately two years ago, an undetectable foreign substance was being washed into the Bay through the creek system which resulted in a large number of fish being killed and washed up on the beaches. The sensitivity of the Jervis Bay ecology is well illustrated by this example. It would be tragic to see a similar effect happening through transmission of diseases brought in through aquaculture farms.

I lastly question the suitability in siting the proposed aquaculture leases off Callala Beach due to the severity of the southerly squalls that thrash the area on a regular basis. Callala Beach is straight open to the heads of the Bay and at least once every month is thrashed by powerful winds and waves as the southerly storms hit. The strength of these storms is attested to by the large amounts of sand that have been taken from the beach in the past year alone, significantly eroding the sand dunes in some places. Past aquaculture leases in Jervis Bay have been sited off Vincentia and Currumbene Creek which are more protected locations and would not have experienced the full strength of these storms.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the proposed aquaculture leases. I would urge you to strongly reconsider this proposal, to recognise it is unsuitable to site these leases off Callala Beach, and indeed to find another location outside the pristine waters of Jervis Bay.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Mitchell