

David Robinson

I lodge my objection to the proposed abalone farm at Pindimar, Port Stephens, NSW.

I have been a visitor to South Pindimar and the greater Port Stephens area for more than 30 years for family holidays with my in-laws who reside on Cambage Street.

I have always enjoyed fishing and respected the ecosystem and the marine park and its surrounding environment. Over the past three years unfortunately I have noticed a change in the marine environment and less fish stocks. As sand has covered much of the sea grass which are feeding beds for marine life, the fish stocks have reduced. It has been brought to my attention that the oyster industry is threatened by disease.

I am concerned that the proposed development of the abalone farm will result in a further decline in the marine environment. I am concerned that the pipelines for the discharge of the waste water are too close to the Marine Park Sanctuary Zone. I understand that the water will be 'treated' before discharge. However, even though it may present a low risk of contamination the consequences of discharge of any pollutants would be high. The marine environment I feel is already under stress and if the discharge for instance, increased the nitrogen, chemical and nutrient levels in the water, I would be concerned that the ecosystem would not be able to be sustained as algae and fungal blooms may develop to the further detriment of the environment. I am concerned that the tidal flows will take the effluent in the westerly direction over the Marine Park Sanctuary Zone. In my understanding, a marine park is to preserve the environment and ecosystem to ensure the protection of breeding grounds for marine life. I have observed turtles and dolphins along this waterway. Fishing is prohibited in this zone so why would any risks be taken that may damage this area.

The beach and sand flats in the vicinity of the proposed abalone farm present a clean, beautiful environment that my family, other visitors and residents have enjoyed for many years. If the development were to be approved I would be concerned that the sand flats and beach would be polluted.

In terms of the Proposal documents I feel that the photographs are not current as they are not showing the present levels of sand coverage of the sea grass beds. The photographs actually show the past extent of the sea grass beds. For the proposal to be scientifically correct, more current photographs need to be submitted.

Port Stephens is highly regarded as a tourist destination. Tourism is a very important part of the economic health of the region. I feel that the risks to the environment and hence the tourist appeal of the area will be threatened by the establishment of the abalone farm. Why take the risk of down grading a magnificent waterway and surrounding environment?

Preservation of our natural environment should always take priority over any commercial enterprise.

