

LIVING MARINE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT 1995

SECTION 75 – MINISTERIAL GUIDELINE

SUBJECT ABALONE MARINE FARMING AND PROCESSING LICENCES

This Ministerial Guideline is issued in respect of the licensing of marine farming and processing of abalone (*HALIOTIS sp.*).

OBJECTIVES

- To guide decision making on applications received for the variation, transfer or granting of any Marine Farming Licence endorsed for abalone (*HALIOTIS sp.*) or the granting of any new fish processing licences pursuant to which live abalone (*HALIOTIS sp.*) are to be held prior to processing, where the premises at which they are held discharge untreated water into the marine environment, in order to take into account the threat to abalone stocks presented by the disease, Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis.

BACKGROUND

Live abalone from a processing facility in southern Tasmania were submitted to the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) Mount Pleasant Laboratories, Launceston, 3 September 2008 showing signs of 'hard fish' syndrome (ie stiffness of the muscle and mantle) associated with Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG). This disease has caused significant mortality in wild and farmed abalone in other parts of the world.

The Tasmanian abalone fishery is divided into 10 regions further categorised, into blocks. The affected abalone at the processing facility were from block 23B (south of Maria Island) and 14B (near Southport). Histopathology signs consistent with AVG were seen in fish from block 23B but not 14B. DNA tests (PCR) conducted in the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) in Geelong confirmed AVG in one of the Maria Island specimens and both of the Southport specimens.

It was considered prudent by the (DPIW) Biosecurity and Product Integrity Division to develop and implement management protocols to manage high risk activities. The DPIW has been progressing this work through the Abalone Biosecurity Project.

While this work is being done, it was also considered prudent to limit the increase of what are considered to be high risk activities.

It is thought that the disease may become clinical in farming and processing facilities due to stress on fish being held in tanks and be transmitted into wild fish through discharge of seawater back to the ocean.

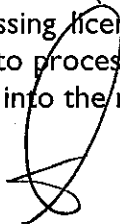
Abalone fishing is one of Tasmania's most valuable fisheries, earning \$250 million annually and abalone farming is growing to be an important primary industry.

APPLICATION

The *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995* ("the Act") provides the Minister with authority to approve applications to vary, transfer or grant a licence.

The disease Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis has had a catastrophic impact on wild abalone stocks along sections of the Victorian coastline and farmed abalone stocks in Victorian abalone marine farms. It has been assessed as representing a significant risk to the abalone resource in Tasmanian waters.

The risks presented by this disease to the Tasmanian abalone resource should be afforded significant weight in determining applications (in particular before determining them favourably) received for the variation, transfer or granting of any Marine Farming Licence endorsed for abalone (*HALIOTIS sp.*) in accordance with either s 83 (1A) (e), 82 (2) (e) or 78 (1) (e) or the granting of any new fish processing licences pursuant to which live abalone (*HALIOTIS sp.*) are to be held prior to processing, where the premises at which they are held discharge untreated water into the marine environment, in accordance with s78(1)(e) of the Act.



David Llewellyn MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

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