

# Statement of Reasons

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**SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL LICENCE 9957/1  
GREEN HEAD, NORFOLK BAY**

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## **DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT PROTETCION AUTHORITY'S DECISION**

To approve the Huon Aquaculture Company Pty Ltd (Huon) application to grant an Environmental Licence 9957/1 in accordance with Section 42J of the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*.

The environmental licence contains a suite of conditions relating to underwater benthic video and broadscale water quality monitoring and noise emission limits, which are of relevance to the environmental management of the activity.

## **BACKGROUND**

On 7 August 2018 Secretary DPIPWE issued Permit 18093 to Huon, pursuant to *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995*, for the purpose of finfish farming at Green Head, Norfolk Bay. Permit 18093 expires on 31 December 2018.

Huon advised EPA of the need to deploy equipment within the permit area around the week ending 15 August 2018 and to commence stocking the site with fish around the weekend on 18/19 August 2018.

Correspondence from the Director, EPA to Huon dated 26 July 2018 outlined that an environmental licence (EL) was required for the activities authorised by Permit 18093 and specified some requirements necessary for consideration of granting of an EL to Huon. Requirements included providing EPA with copies of;

- Interim baseline environmental survey report
- Noise report in relation to the vessel, Captain Bill
- Report on stakeholder engagement conducted by Huon

Huon provided the interim baseline report on 3 August 2018, the noise report on 9 August 2018 and the stakeholder engagement report on 13 August 2018.

### ***Baseline Environmental Survey***

The Director, EPA endorsed the interim baseline report in correspondence to Huon on 13 August 2018. Endorsement of the report provided Huon with approval to commence deployment of marine farming equipment and moorings into the permit area.

No threatened species were identified at any of the sites surveyed.

The Director, EPA received correspondence from the National Handfish Recovery Team (NHRT) on 14 August 2018 regarding potential impact from Huon's intended operations at Green Head on the Red Handfish.

Advice was sought from Policy Conservation and Advice Branch of DPIPWE (PCAB) regarding the need for further survey work by Huon given the information the Director, EPA had received from the NHRT. Advice provided by PCAB on the 15 August 2018 advised that the specific handfish-targeted survey effort undertaken for the baseline survey conducted by Huon was consistent with established guidelines and advice previously provided for handfish surveys.

The targeted handfish survey component of the baseline survey conducted by Huon identified uniform silty sand sediments at all transect sites (as did all 24 compliance point ROV dives). This is not considered suitable Red Handfish habitat.

The baseline survey also included seagrass monitoring at three sites near the permit area. All three sites were in approximately 5m depth and adjacent to the coastline. Review of the video footage for these three sites did identify some habitat that may be considered suitable for the Red Handfish.

Given the unsuitability of the habitat within the permit area and as no handfish were detected during surveys within the permit area, this indicates a significantly reduced level of risk of direct impacts on handfish.

However, as it is not known whether Red Handfish are located within the potentially suitable habitat identified in the nearby seagrass monitoring sites, and presumably elsewhere along the coastline adjacent to the permit area, it could be argued that permit activities may have the potential to indirectly impact any handfish located in suitable inshore habitat i.e. nutrients from farm affecting vegetative cover etc.

As the Commonwealth legislation (EPBCA) provides for indirect impacts, the survey effort to meet the requirements of that legislation may be different. Notwithstanding, this would be a matter for the proponents of the action i.e. Huon.

### **Noise**

EPA noise specialist advised that the noise report for the vessel *Captain Bill* was satisfactory. EPA communicated this to Huon on 9 August 2018.

Several noise-related conditions have been included in the EL.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

EPA has reviewed the stakeholder engagement plan. The report identified that Huon have engaged with a broad range of stakeholders and has been very open and transparent with regard to its intended operations.

As communicated to Huon on 26 July 2018, the issuing of the EL will provide Huon with the necessary authority to commence stocking the permit site with fish.

Wes Ford  
**DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT PROTETCION AUTHORITY**

**17 August 2018**