

**North Arm Cove**  
**Community Association**  
**Worimi Country**

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Subject: **Oyster Leases North Arm Cove**

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Program Leader Aquaculture  
Department of Primary Industries Fisheries  
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Dear Ian,

It is over 2.5 years since we have contacted you, but the problems with the oyster leases at North Arm Cove remain the same. There are several matters that I would like to raise.

**Oyster Lease OL86/138**

The North Arm Cove community are still concerned about oyster lease OL86/138. Earlier this year, there were arguments between the adjacent residents and the oyster lessee.

We have been complaining about the state of this lease since the floating lines were installed in early 2019. I have previously explained why this lease causes such problems. The lease is visually untidy and does not comply with the Best Practice Guidelines for Floating Infrastructure and the NSW Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy 2021. There are two types of infrastructure, with old racks in the south with a single line of crooked posts on the shore side of the racks, and floating lines in the north.

The Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy 2021 states: "If possible, leases that are within the same visual catchment should use the same types of cultivation equipment, same spacing and alignment as this creates uniformity." The Strategy gives examples of what is required "To create visual harmony and compatibility". The main problems with this lease are that it is visually unattractive and it restricts access to the water.

In your letter dated 2/02/2022, you stated that any changes to the lease to improve the visual amenity are voluntary and not required for compliance. However, the state of this lease is causing distress to some of the local residents and in some cases there have been verbal altercations. We are aware that the oyster industry in Port Stephens has been badly affected by the QX disease outbreak, but this appears to be over, and the lessee has extended his floating lines further north within the lease. He has also told some of the adjacent residents that he intends to further extend the floating lines and occupy the entire lease. At the beginning of the year he occupied less than 50% of the lease. He currently occupies about two thirds of the lease. As a result, he has restricted access to the main waterway as the lines are loose and it is difficult to navigate between the lines.

We are requesting that the old posts and rails are removed from the southern section of the lease, the replacement of crooked posts with floating buoys and tightening of the floating lines. We would also like to see some sections have the lines more widely spaced to allow safe navigation. This lease

is adjacent to a residential area and should be held to a high standard rather than operated in a manner that gives the whole industry a bad name.

### **QX Disease Outbreak**

We would appreciate an update about the QX disease outbreak in Port Stephens. We understand that now that the high rainfall has ceased and the salinity is higher, the QX disease event has subsided. We would like to know whether the QX disease outbreak is over, whether it will be an ongoing problem in Port Stephens and whether there is still a quarantine on Port Stephens oysters.

### **Waves and Sediment**

We have noticed that the foreshore has become muddier in the last few years. With two years of high rainfall, it would be difficult to determine whether this is due to high sediment loads or the installation of the floating infrastructure. In your letter of 2/02/2022, you stated that the NSW Aquaculture Research Advisory Committee is supporting a project to consider the impacts of floating basket cultivation. Did this research occur and if so, are there any results to date?

### **Old Infrastructure Near Bundabah**

When OL94/009 was released, we were told that a condition of consent was to remove the old infrastructure (very big derelict posts). We would like to know what progress has been made in the last 3 years.

### **Lease Inspections**

Could you please notify us about the proposed timing of the next triennial lease inspection and the results of the last inspection in North Arm Cove?

### **Community Involvement**

When there is bad weather, the oyster lines often break. They sometimes break even in calmer weather. One of our residents regularly walks the shoreline from near the creek that lies between Carrington and North Arm Cove and the shoreline from North Arm Cove to Bulga Creek. He picks up all the easily accessible oyster infrastructure that has washed ashore and organises for John Lyall to pick up the material in the west and Mark Salm to pick up the material near Bulga Creek. Our oyster debris collector is 80 and this job should, at some stage in the future, fall on the shoulders of the oyster farmers. It needs to be done from the shore, not a boat, and should be written into the Conditions of Consent for oyster leases. If the lines break, the oyster farmers should be on the shore looking for debris.

### **Bulga Creek**

About two months ago, a large area of land (over 4ha) adjacent to Bulga Creek was cleared of all undergrowth and some large trees. The cleared area is adjacent to the Bulga Creek Marine Sanctuary Zone. The clearing extended beyond the property boundary near Bulga Creek into an area that is marked on some maps as high biodiversity. The property address is 3214 Gladstone Cres, North Arm Cove. The property number is 322589. There needs to be some rectification work

undertaken to protect the sanctuary zone from siltation. Could you please pass this information on to the Marine Park management? There has also been clearing of shoreline properties in the nonurban area adjacent to OL87/146 where large amounts of fine crushed rock have ended up in the water.

### **Conclusion**

It is nearly three years since I have corresponded with you. We would appreciate an update on any matters which may affect North Arm Cove.

Regards,

Janine Reid,  
Aquaculture Subcommittee Convenor