

## Dirty Water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0bhcp5VcnA>

Environment Tasmania today released documentary film footage showing severe pollution being discharged into pristine headwater streams of the River Derwent catchment. This pollution is being spewed in to the Derwent and Florentine rivers from two large salmon hatcheries that are hidden away in the Tasmanian wilderness. The difference between upstream and downstream of these industrial farm sites is stark. Beautiful clear waters prized for trout-fishing upstream; and a slimy, stinking, befouled mess downstream.

Monitoring of water quality in the two rivers was undertaken with samples collected upstream, downstream and at the hatchery outfalls. A report prepared by experienced water quality scientist Christine Coughanowr revealed very high nutrient levels in both the outfalls and downstream rivers, ranging from 5 to more than 128 times upstream levels. Significant levels of fouling were also observed on the rocks and river bed downstream. Coliform and E coli bacteria levels in one outfall were extremely high, and there was a strong odour and visible slick in the area.

‘These levels of pollution are disturbing in pristine waterways that flow into the Hydro lakes at Wayatinah and Catagunya, and I am concerned about risks of nuisance or toxic algal blooms in our drinking water supplies and recreational waters. Similar high nutrient levels have been documented in recent monitoring by the DEP, so this is clearly an on-going problem.’ she said.

She noted that the EPA has recently taken on regulation of large salmon hatcheries, of which there are about a dozen across the state, including three more in the Derwent catchment. ‘Some improvements are currently planned to remove solids at these two sites, but much more needs to be done. It is not acceptable to be discharging such high nutrient loads into pristine rivers when the technology is available to deal with this. Clear expectations and short time frames should be required to clean up this mess.’

Environment Tasmania spokesperson Philip Cocker said he was shocked by the results and that they were much worse than he expected.

This is a dirty secret that has polluted our waterways for over two decades that must be exposed and dealt with. For two decades or more salmon hatcheries located on the headwaters of the Florentine and Derwent Rivers have been pouring thousands of tonnes annually of fish effluent in these rivers. The treatment of this sewage has been all but non-existent as has been the regulation of this disgusting mess.

Environment Tasmania spokesperson Philip called for this pollution to be treated as an environmental crime. “How has this been allowed for so long without meaningful action? We think we have pristine rivers only to find massive pollution pouring in to our rivers, poorly regulated and monitored. This level of pollution is a bucket of slime on Tasmania’s Brand as clean and green”.

“We are calling for urgent action to cease this pollution of our rivers immediately and if the plants can’t prevent the flow of sewage in to the river they should be closed. This sort of pollution is not acceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. This is Hobart’s water supply. How is acceptable and how much is it costing Taswater to clean this pollution out of the water?

“We are calling for the Environment Minister to launch immediate action to firstly prevent any more of this pollution reaching the river and secondly investigate how it has been allowed to occur for so long. We know the EPA is underfunded but surely industrial pollution on this scale should be up the top of the list for action and prevention”.

We are calling for a zero pollution plan for these factories immediately.

Philip Cocker

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