

East Coast too precious to risk

AS regular visitors to Tasmania from New Zealand, we invariably head for the East Coast, lured by what must surely rank among the world's most unspoilt holiday destinations.

The beaches are clean and beautiful, the water clear and unsullied.

One only has to go to coastal resorts in the Mediterranean or Atlantic shores to see the difference and be grateful.

We are aghast to learn of a proposed fish farm at Okehampton Bay. If it were to go ahead, the area would lose forever its pristine qualities.

Proponents may claim that the farm would have the highest standards and strictest controls but no fish farm is without discharge, no fish farm is free of the risk of accidents occurring. Nor can they safeguard with complete certainty against the risk of disease or of viral or bacterial contamination.

Even the material structures intended as safeguards bring their own environmental degradation.

This past week, in the far south of New Zealand, a lethal oyster parasite, *Bonomia ostraea*, was discovered on two oyster farms on Stewart Island, resulting in the total eradication of every farm on the island. The reason? The risk to wild oyster populations.

While shellfish farming is different from the farming of fin fish, the Stewart Island oyster parasite disaster illustrates the risks that any such enterprise poses for the environment in unforeseen effects on existing marine life.

Fish farming should be kept well away from the East Coast — Tasmanians deserve better.

**Jackie and Lloyd Walker
Parnell, Auckland**

Why pick on salmon?

AFTER seeing the reasons why certain restaurants are not using "Tassie salmon" (*Mercury*, June 26), I almost choked on my kangaroo patties.

They say they would like to know what additives are being fed to achieve the colour of the salmon meat. Why single out salmon? I bet they still serve red meat and white meat that has been boosted in some way by some producers and butchers, also vegetables and fruits that have been sprayed with pesticides, some which have been banned in other countries throughout the world for years but still being used in Australia, and then there is the food additives and preservatives that are not good for our health as well.

**Geoff Kennedy
Claremont**

Government in denial

IT is perhaps understandable that over the years Tasmanian politicians have been supportive of an expanding salmon industry. After all, regional jobs are considered important by most.

It is also understandable they don't fully understand the impacts of intensive fish farms on shallow inshore environments. The deleterious impacts sometimes take years to become apparent.

What is far more difficult to understand is the pigheaded reluctance of the Liberal Government and Labor Opposition to accept that the impacts on marine environments are real and that firm regulation is necessary before any further expansion of the industry is allowed. To pretend that all is well is not good for the future of the industry and certainly bad for marine eco-

systems. Industry regulation has demonstrably failed over the past 30 years. It must be strengthened, not by weasel words but through additional resources.

The salmon industry has to stop talking about moving offshore and actually move offshore. This or change to land-based systems. Until proposals for change to lease arrangements are made, there should be no additional growth of the industry.

Most importantly there should be a complete rethink on Okehampton Bay. It is not suited to current intensive salmon farming practices and particularly by any company with a penchant for overstocking. You do not need to be familiar with aquaculture to understand that no reasonable person would allow Tassal anywhere near Okehampton Bay. This is a publicly listed company with a clear motive to make as much money as possible. By way of contrast, if land-based farmers overstock they pay the price by degrading their own farm. If Tassal overstocks it makes more money.

Any politician or individual who supports that company going to Okehampton Bay is really saying they do not care for that bay at all. There is no question that the marine environment will be impacted. What is not known is how far the impact will affect surrounding waters.

If Tasmania had a competent regulatory regimen it would not make Okehampton Bay any more suited for fish farming. However, expansion of the industry elsewhere may be tolerable if standards were high enough. By denying there is a problem, the State Government demonstrates only an abrogation of its responsibility to the wider community.

**Chris Wells
Battery Point**