

**DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**AQUACULTURE LICENCE - APPLICATION FOR VARIATION**

**WTN Nominees Pty Ltd & Pelsaert (WA) Pty Ltd  
Abrolhos Islands**

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<b>File Ref</b>	fA1034466
<b>Date of Application</b>	8 January 2024
<b>General Location</b>	Abrolhos Islands, WA
<b>Total Area of Proposed New Sites</b>	No new sites proposed
<b>Species</b>	Various seaweed species
<b>Culture Method</b>	Subsurface rope panels secured to the seafloor
<b>Further Information</b>	Contact Siti Mutaza at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) on <a href="mailto:siti.mutaza@dpird.wa.gov.au">siti.mutaza@dpird.wa.gov.au</a> .

# Information for Consultation – Variation of an Aquaculture Licence

*WTN Nominees Pty Ltd & Pelsaert (WA) Pty Ltd*

June 2024

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## Introduction

This document provides information for consideration by government agencies; industry stakeholders; and community and industry groups, regarding an application submitted by WTN Nominees Pty Ltd & Pelsaert (WA) Pty Ltd (WTN & Pelsaert) to vary its aquaculture licence and for the grant of a new aquaculture lease.

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## Proposal

On 8 January 2024, WTN & Pelsaert made an application to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) for the variation of aquaculture licence number IDCA 1615 (Licence) to add various species of seaweed to the authorisation. On 13 August 2023, WTN & Pelsaert made an application to the Minister for Fisheries for an aquaculture lease.

The application did not propose any changes to the area subject to the authorisation, which comprises 799.10 hectares and is located north of the Southern Group of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands and within the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone (MWADZ).

The Licence was issued in 2004 for the purpose of finfish culture. While the lease application still includes finfish aquaculture in the Aquaculture Development Plan, DPIRD notes that further approvals are required before finfish aquaculture can occur at the site.

In addition to species authorised under the Licence, WTN & Pelsaert has made an application to culture the following species of seaweed, all of which are endemic to the Abrolhos Islands.

*Ecklonia radiata*  
*Caulerpa obscura*  
*Caulerpa flexilis*  
*Asparagopsis armata*  
*Ulva lactuca*

The proponent is proposing to conduct a staged trial using these seaweed species to determine the suitability of the site and proposed gear type for seaweed aquaculture.

The aquaculture licence application is assessed with regard for Administrative guideline No. 1 – *Assessment of Applications for Authorisations for Aquaculture and Pearl Farming in Coastal Waters of Western Australia*. Consideration is given to the criteria under section 92(1) of the *Fisheries Resources Management Act 1994* (FRMA).

Noting that the site is located within an Aquaculture Development Zone that was established for the purpose of finfish aquaculture, and that the proposal contemplates the production of seaweed species, the application will be assessed according to *Fisheries Occasional Publication No. 147 - Aquaculture Development Zones – Policy Position Relating to Permitted Alternative Species*.

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## Source of Stock and Methods

WTN & Pelsaert propose to source broodstock by fragmenting colonies of seaweed collected under the authority of a broodstock collection exemption. Subject to an exemption being granted, take of broodstock will be aligned with the limits and methodologies provided in *Fisheries Occasional Publication No. 143 – Aquaculture of Seaweed in Western Australia*.

Where seedstock are collected from aquaculture gear, accurate records of stock harvested will be kept in accordance with conditions on the licence.

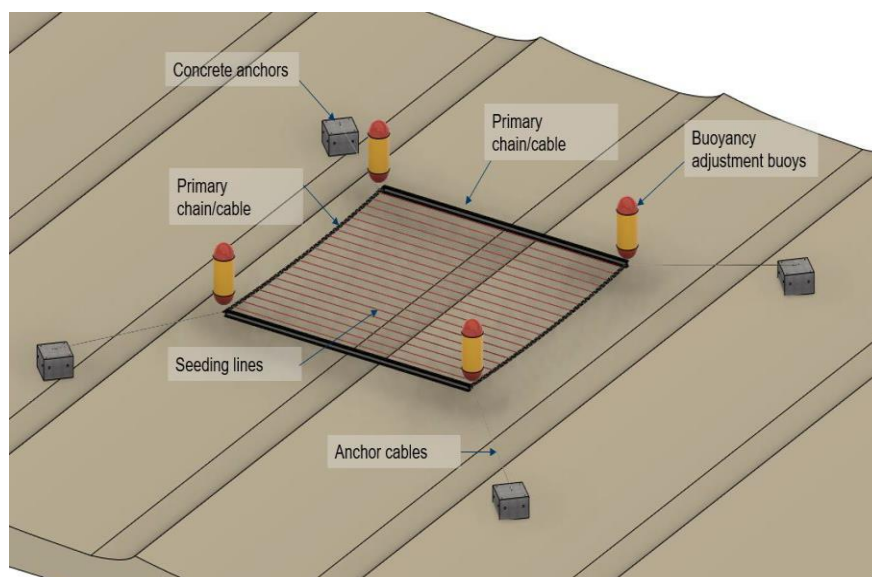
WTN & Pelsaert proposes two methods to source stock for the marine sites.

1. Laboratory cultivation at the Wernberg Lab at the University of Western Australia to create a seedstock for the target species.
2. Propagation from seaweed cuttings collected pursuant to a broodstock exemption and attached to a grow-out system within the site.

Grow out of stock will occur on aquaculture gear consisting of ten submerged panel structures (10m x 10m), each containing 20 seeding lines, fixed with concrete anchor blocks (2.3 m x 2.3m x 1m). Seeding lines are 10m in length with 0.5m spacing as displayed in **Figure 1**. All gear will be placed over sandy substrate and suspended at a minimum depth of 10m, to avoid impact on the benthic environment.

Seaweed will be harvested annually. In its initial trial phase, total annual production of macroalgal species will not exceed 18 tonnes wet weight.

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**Figure 1:** Proposed seaweed grow out panel consisting of seeding lines and anchor blocks.

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## **Management and Environmental Monitoring**

### *Management and Environmental Monitoring Plan (MEMP)*

WTN & Pelsaert has submitted a MEMP, which includes identification and management of environmental and biosecurity risks.

### *Benthic Habitat*

Benthic habitat at the site was most recently mapped as part of the development of the MWADZ and found to comprise of 99% bare sand and 1% mixed assemblages. To reduce any potential impacts to the benthic community WTN & Pelsaert will only position anchor systems over bare sand substrate.

The site is deep (>30m) and well flushed with current speeds of 8.7-11 cm/s.

### *Marine Fauna*

Mitigation measures and reporting requirements for wildlife interactions will be undertaken in compliance with the relevant sections of the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone Marine Fauna Interaction Management Plan (i.e., those that do not apply specifically to finfish production).

### *Marine Pest Risks*

The MEMP describes administrative and operational biosecurity controls that the applicant will apply to mitigate the risk of pest introduction at the site. These include the use of local broodstock, cleaning of equipment before it is brought onto site, and record keeping and reporting obligations. Further controls may be applied through the MEMP and, or licence conditions.

### *Disease Risks*

Regular visual inspections to monitor disease and mortality will be conducted by the licence holder. The licence holder will report any unexplained mortality or signs of disease to DPIRD within 24 hours of detection. Further controls may be applied through the MEMP and, or licence conditions.

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## **Aquaculture Lease**

The aquaculture lease application is assessed with regard to Administrative Guideline No. 2 – *Principles for Grant and Management of Aquaculture Leases in Coastal Waters of Western Australia*. Consideration is given to the criteria under section 97(5A) of the FRMA.

Presently, the area is “open access” waters. The general public is free to access and traverse the area, including for the purpose of recreation and fishing. There are no current or prospective claims as to any form of tenure, and no specific “use” of the area for another specific purpose is presently foreseeable.

To address effective use of the site, WTN & Pelsaert have provided an Aquaculture Development Plan, which outlines appropriate development targets.