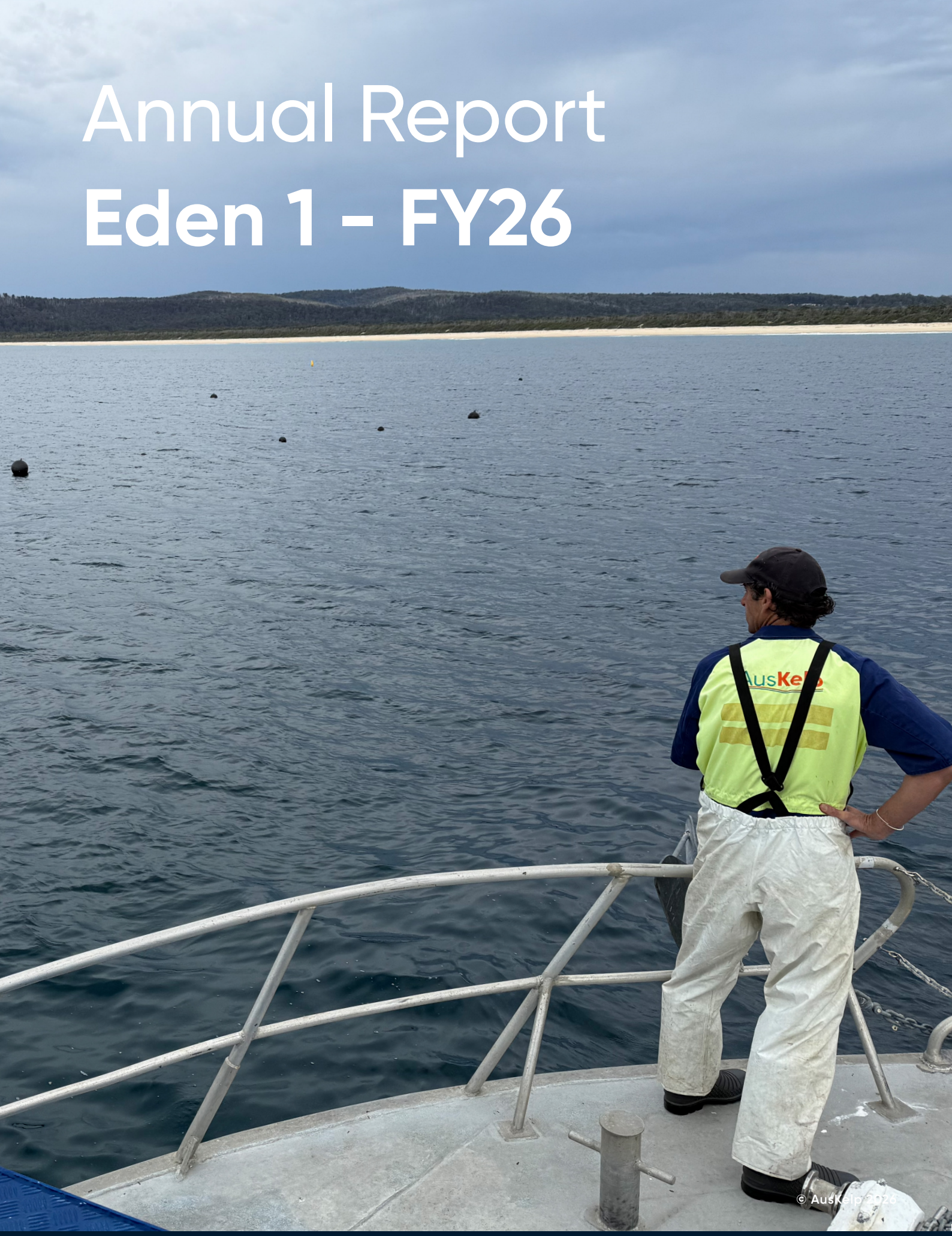
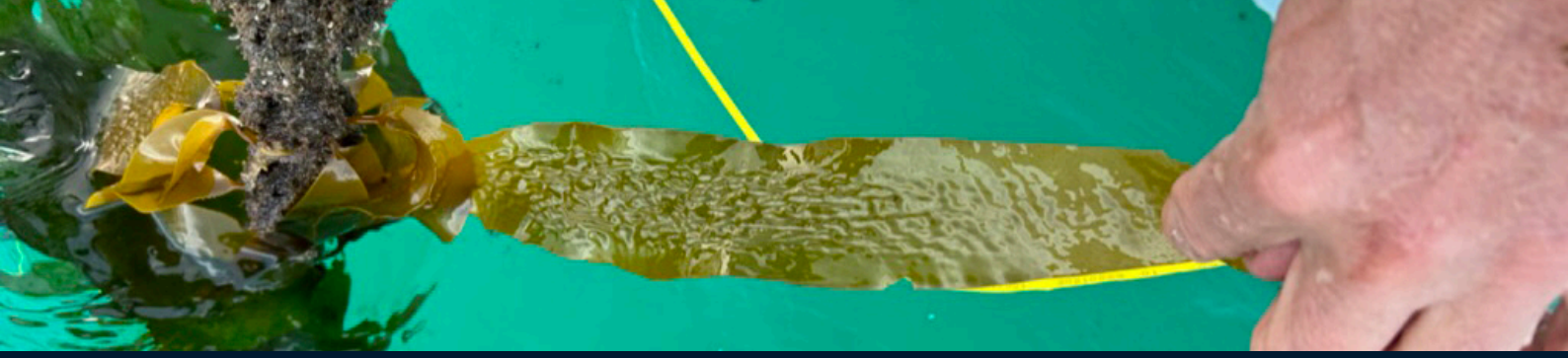
Annual Report
Eden 1 – FY26



AusKelp Pty Ltd

October 2026



Auskelp FY26 Update

Since 2019, Auskelp has been working to establish a sustainable marine industry that creates local jobs, produces quality food and agricultural products, contributes to healthier oceans, and demonstrates that Australia can successfully farm its own native kelp.

FY26 has been a massive year for the Auskelp team. We continued our ocean testing program in Disaster Bay, expanded our scientific and operational capability in the Port of Eden, progressed end-use product development, secured important government and industry support, and delivered the most substantial environmental assessment undertaken for a seaweed aquaculture project in New South Wales.

Most importantly, years of ocean testing continue to demonstrate that Golden Kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*) can be successfully and safely cultivated in the high-energy waters of southern NSW.

In the background, NSW ocean waters continue to experience high temperatures and prolonged marine heatwave conditions. These persistent temperature increases reinforce why long-term testing of Golden Kelp is so important. It's critical to understand how this native species responds to warming oceans, intense storms and changing ecological conditions. If Australia is to protect its remaining kelp ecosystems, and at the same time develop a resilient seaweed industry, we need to know more.

The devastating harmful algal bloom (HAB) in South Australia is a cautionary tale for just how quickly marine ecosystems can be disrupted when environmental conditions (and ocean temperatures) change.

From research to industry

In March 2026, Auskelp established a new Research Development Centre in Eden, providing a permanent operational base for our hatchery, laboratory, processing and research activities.

We are very pleased to have the incredible support of Marine Bioproducts Cooperative Research Centre (**MBCRC**) in this important research expansion. In addition, Auskelp received NSW Government support through the Aquaculture Industry Development Program (**AIDP**). These partnerships recognise both the commercial potential of Australian kelp and the broader strategic importance of developing a domestic marine bioproducts industry.

In concert with our ocean testing, we continue to develop kelp based products and document the benefits. We are testing premium food-grade Golden Kelp utilising modified-atmosphere packaging (MAP) and other processing technologies that allow fresh Australian kelp to reach domestic and international export markets. Our agricultural trials continue testing kelp hydrolysates and biostimulants for plants, soils and livestock. These products are producing very exciting results and we are confident we can improve agricultural productivity and animal health while also reducing dependence on synthetic inputs.

Working with our community

As a multi-generational Wonboyn community member, I understand that introducing kelp farming into Disaster Bay creates questions.

Throughout FY26, we have made every effort to inform the community. We have held community meetings, released FAQ documents, kept people informed via email and responded directly to community enquiries. Our team provided detailed scientific and environmental information through the NSW planning process, and we remain committed to being fully transparent about what we are doing and why.

Auskelp FY26 Update (continued)

The Eden-1 State Significant Development process has required us to provide and validate an extraordinary body of scientific, engineering, environmental and community work. As part of that process, the public exhibition of the Eden-1 Environmental Impact Statement (**EIS**) provided an opportunity for supporters and opponents to express their views.

At Auskelp, we take the views and concerns of the local community very seriously. Following public exhibition, we reviewed every public and agency submission and prepared a detailed Submissions Response Report (**SRR**). Our clear objective is to replace assumptions with substantive evidence, ensuring everyone has the facts. This has been a demanding process, and it has further contributed to one of the most comprehensive bodies of information yet assembled on open-ocean Golden Kelp aquaculture.

Importantly, the evidence consistently demonstrates that kelp farming in Disaster Bay has a low risk profile with many benefits. When located over a sandy seabed more than 1.1 km offshore, and using native locally-sourced species without feed, fertiliser, freshwater, pesticides or antibiotics, the Project delivers one of the lowest-risk farming practices available anywhere.

Looking forward

As a result of the EIS consultation, the Independent Planning Commission (**IPC**) will now determine the Eden-1 project approval. This additional approval step has been triggered because the Eden-1 Project received more than 50 community objections. Auskelp welcomes review and determination by the IPC, which we expect will occur later this year, or early in 2027.

A golden opportunity

In Eden, we have the opportunity to build a new world-class marine industry. Golden Kelp is a highly-suitable native kelp that produces quality food and agriculture products. For the Bega Valley, this means something tangible: jobs for scientists, marine technicians and services, hatchery staff, vessel operators, as well as processing, manufacturing and logistics staff.

The biomass we produce supports the development of new regional businesses and innovative environmentally-friendly products. It also opens the opportunity for international export of arguably one of the healthiest and best-tasting kelps in the world.

After more than six years of research and development, we believe more strongly than ever that kelp farming is good for our oceans, good for our local region and beneficial for the future. We are more determined than ever that we are doing the right thing and that time and the future results will prove us correct.

As always, I would like to thank our scientists, staff, contractors, the MBCRC and our research partners, the many government agencies we deal with, as well as our industry partners and members of the community who have contributed to the project during FY26.

Sincerely,



Christopher Ride
Managing Director



AusKelp

1. A New Type of Industry

Seaweed farming is a foundational "circular economy" industry. Sunlight and naturally occurring nutrients in seawater are converted into renewable biomass that can be used to produce food, agricultural biostimulants, fertilisers, animal feed, biomaterials, bioplastics and other marine bioproducts. Any residual materials are directed into lower-value applications such as biostimulants and soil conditioners, ensuring that 100% of the developed biomass is utilised.



Figure 9: Disaster Bay Golden Kelp, 155 days-old (Credit: Auskelp).

Changing ocean conditions

The consequences of rising ocean temperatures have already had an impact on various regions of Australia. The unprecedented harmful algal bloom (**HAB**) that began in South Australia in March 2025 ultimately affected an estimated 20,000 square kilometrws of marine waters and caused the deaths of approximately one million marine animals across more than 600 species. The event has affected fish, sharks, rays, shellfish, seahorses, marine mammals and birds, with significant impacts on marine ecosystems, fisheries, aquaculture and coastal communities. Scientists have linked the development and persistence of the bloom to a combination of warming oceans, nutrient availability and hydrodynamic conditions. The scale of the event and its lingering effects are a sobering demonstration of how rapidly marine ecosystems can be disrupted. In many areas of South Australia fishing is banned, and it is unknown how long the marine ecosystems will take to recover.

For Auskelp, this reinforces an important principle: if we are going to build marine industries that are resilient to these kind of changes, we need to better understand the effects of ocean warming on brown kelps. Golden Kelp is a native foundation species found all along the southern coastlines of Australia that absorbs dissolved nutrients and carbon as it grows. Australia has been losing its native brown kelp forests for decades, including *Ecklonia radiata*, with documented declines driven by ocean warming, marine heatwaves and associated ecological change — a trend the NSW Government recognises is depleting the abundance of wild kelp forests. Therefore, developing the capability to cultivate Golden Kelp in an increasingly warming ocean is an investment in both Australia's emerging Blue Economy as well as for our understanding of the changing marine environment.

At Auskelp we intend to do everything we can to protect Australia's wild kelp stands.

2. End Use Products

The Eden-1 Kelp Aquaculture Farm has the capability to deliver high value biomass with multiple end-use applications across a broad range of industries and products.

Kelp is an exceptionally versatile marine resource capable of supporting a diverse range of innovative high-value products. Auskelp's target markets extend from premium food-grade kelp, functional extracts for nutraceuticals, agricultural biostimulants, and animal feed additives. These products create significant value across the human food, health and agricultural sectors, including opportunities to improve agricultural crop performance, reduce reliance on synthetic fertilisers, and also provides beneficial nutritional supplements for livestock. This diversity of applications is an important part of the opportunity: a single sustainably cultivated marine crop can supply multiple value chains while supporting the development of a circular, low-impact regional industry.

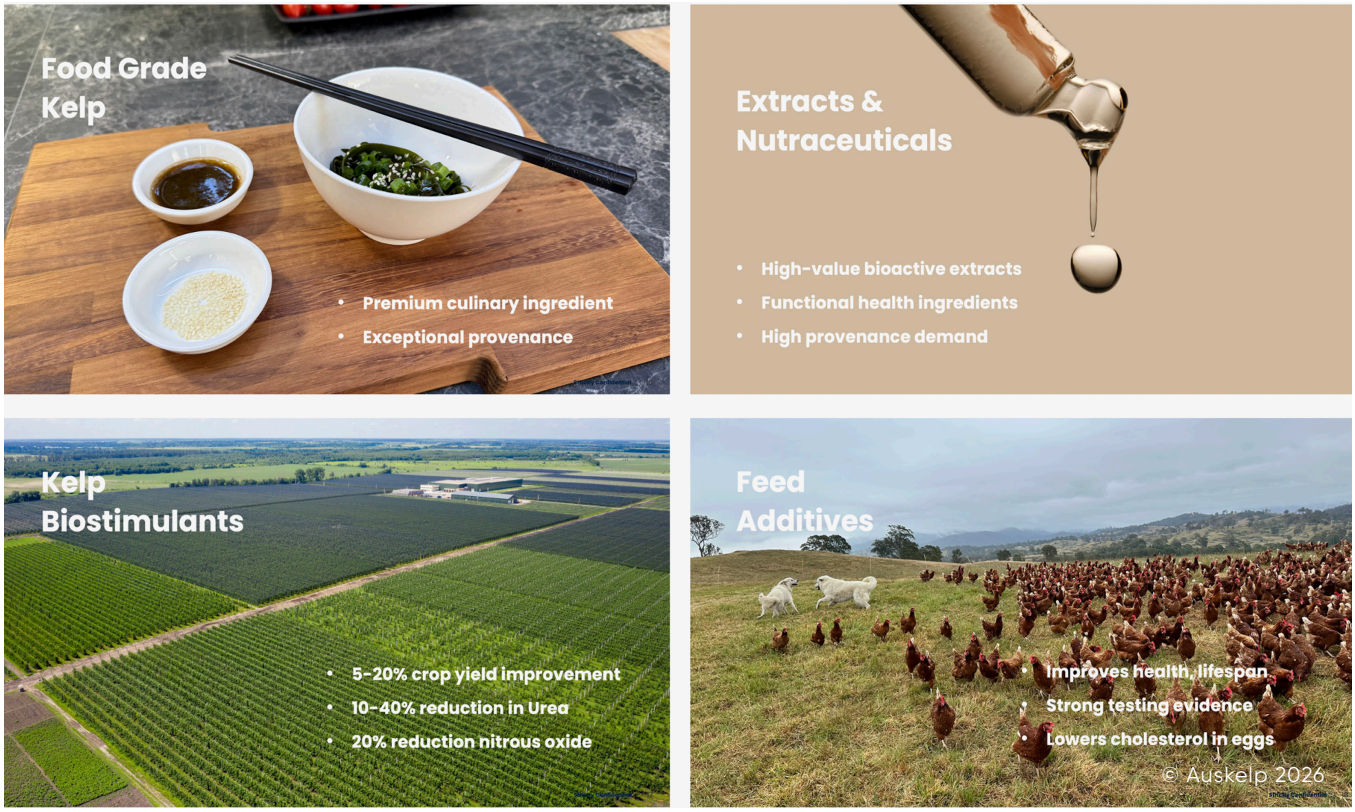


Figure 1 (group): End-use Auskelp products for Golden Kelp (Credit:

Australia requires new industries that produce sustainable natural resources while reducing environmental impact. Developing a domestic kelp industry reduces reliance on imported ingredients. Australia currently imports approximately A$40 million in dry seaweed products each year, demonstrating significant potential to replace imports with products derived from Australian-grown native species.

Kelp farming is increasingly recognised as a priority industry, with strong alignment across Australian and NSW government strategies for sustainable aquaculture, the Blue Economy, regional development, circular economies and lower-emissions agriculture. It represents an emerging industry where economic development and environmental sustainability can be closely aligned, creating new jobs and investment while making productive use of Australia's extensive marine resources.

3. Eden-1 Research Development Centre

FY26 marked an important development for Auskelp with the establishment of our new **Research Development Centre** (RDC) at 18–20 Weecoon Street, Eden. The facility provides Auskelp with a permanent operational and scientific base in the Port of Eden, directly adjacent to offshore research sites.

The RDC brings together several critical parts of the Golden Kelp production cycle: gametophyte cultivation, hatchery propagation, seeding technologies, microscopy and biological monitoring, equipment preparation, post-harvest handling and end-use product research. Successful kelp farming begins long before a locally seeded line reaches the ocean. Auskelp has been developing propagation and end-use product development protocols since 2021. The Eden RDC allows those techniques to be refined and progressively scaled while maintaining controlled biosecurity and world-class quality management procedures.

This new facility represents and important and much-needed first stage investment in Eden and the Bega Valley Shire. A successful kelp industry needs far more than just ocean leases. It requires hatcheries, laboratories, vessels, engineers, marine technicians, food-processing capability, cold storage, logistics, research partnerships and skilled local employment. The Eden RDC represents the beginning of that supporting infrastructure.







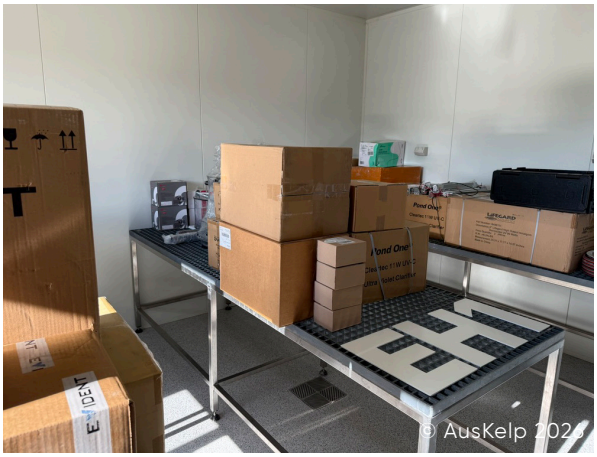


Figure 2 (group): Auskelp Eden-1 RDC under construction, 18-20 Weecoon St Eden NSW 2551 (Credit: Auskelp).

Some people may question why Auskelp are making significant investments before regulatory approval has been granted. The answer is, additional R&D is required, time is against us, and we remain confident that regulatory approval for Eden-1 is more than warranted. Australia and NSW desperately needs environmentally-friendly industries like this. Auskelp has spent more than six years developing the science, technology and practical knowledge required to grow Golden Kelp, and the results continue to strengthen our confidence in the merits of what we are doing, and what can be achieved.

Kelp farming offers something incredibly rare: an opportunity to create regional jobs and economic growth while producing products that are genuinely beneficial for people, agriculture and the marine environment. We believe Golden Kelp farming will be an important Australian industry, and we believe the Port of Eden should be at the centre of it.

4. Industry and Government Support

Marine Bioproducts CRC

In July 2025, Auskelp became a Core Partner of the Marine Bioproducts Cooperative Research Centre (**MBCRC**). The MBCRC brings together industry, universities and research organisations to develop Australia's marine bioproducts sector and accelerate the translation of marine science into commercial products. Its involvement provides Auskelp with access to a broader national research network and supports the development of cultivation systems, processing technologies and high-value products derived from Australian seaweeds.

MBCRC Chairman John Gunn has described Eden-1 as one of the most important aquaculture projects in Australia. His assessment reflects that Eden-1 is not simply an individual aquaculture farm; it represents the possibility of establishing the scientific, regulatory and commercial foundations for a much larger Australian industry. This directly supports the objectives of the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centre Program, whose aim is to improve the competitiveness, productivity and sustainability of Australian marine sectors by bringing industry and researchers together to solve industry problems and commercialise new technologies.



Figure 3: MBCRC co-sponsored scientific infrastructure (Credit: Auskelp).



Figure 4: MBCRC executive Anthony Dyer and Chairman John Gunn visit Eden-1 project for test harvest, October 2025 (Credit: Auskelp).

NSW Government Aquaculture Industry Development Program (AIDP)

In April 2026, NSW Minister for Agriculture and Regional NSW Tara Moriarty announced $896,805 in NSW Government funding for Auskelp through the Aquaculture Industry Development Program (**AIDP**) to support the purchase of a specialised $1.9 m offshore research vessel, enabling the innovation of offshore kelp farming, seeding and harvesting.

The investment is part of the NSW Government's $20 million Aquaculture Industry Development Program, designed to increase regional productivity, exports and climate resilience, support circular-economy and Net Zero objectives, and build NSW capability in sustainable seafood and marine bioproducts. AIDP also supports the NSW Aquaculture Vision Statement's ambition to double the value of the State's aquaculture sector to $300 million by 2030. For Auskelp, this is an important recognition that Eden-1 is about more than growing kelp. It is about establishing the knowledge and capability required to build a seaweed farming industry in regional NSW.

5. Circular Economy

In October 2025, Auskelp, Marine Bioproducts CRC, Ocean2Earth and Bega Circular Valley formalised their shared commitment by signing a Memorandum of Understanding in the Port of Eden, establishing a joint multi-million-dollar research and development program to advance kelp farming, processing and marine-based biostimulant manufacturing and testing in the region. The collaboration aims to create a circular supply chain — growing Golden Kelp in the ocean, processing it locally, and transforming the biomass into high-value products for Australian agriculture. It brings together aquaculture, research, manufacturing and terrestrial farming with a common objective: to establish a new blue-green industry in the Bega Valley that creates regional jobs while supporting more sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices.



Figure 5: MOU signing between MBCRC, Auskelp, Ocean2Earth, Bega Circular Valley to support the multimillion-dollar circular economy research and development program for kelp and biofertiliser manufacture in the Bega Valley. L to R: Russell Fitzpatrick (Mayor, Bega Valley Shire Council), Andrew Taylor (Bega Circularity Cooperative), Christopher Ride (Auskelp), John Gunn (Chairman, MBCRC), Kyran Crane (Ocean2Earth), Tim Crane (Ocean2Earth and indigenous member), October 2025 Snug Cove, Eden (Credit: Auskelp).

6. Government Policy Support

Across Commonwealth, NSW, regional and local government, more than 24 policies, strategies and planning documents support objectives directly relevant to Eden-1, including sustainable aquaculture, seaweed cultivation, the Blue Economy, regional economic diversification and employment, marine bioproducts, Net Zero and circular economy development.

This policy framework includes the NSW Seaweed Prospectus, NSW aquaculture policies and roadmaps, the NSW Marine Waters Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy, the Marine Estate Management Strategy, regional economic development strategies and plans, and the Bega Valley Shire's strategic planning framework. Collectively, these documents demonstrate clear and longstanding government support for establishing sustainable marine industries such as kelp farming.

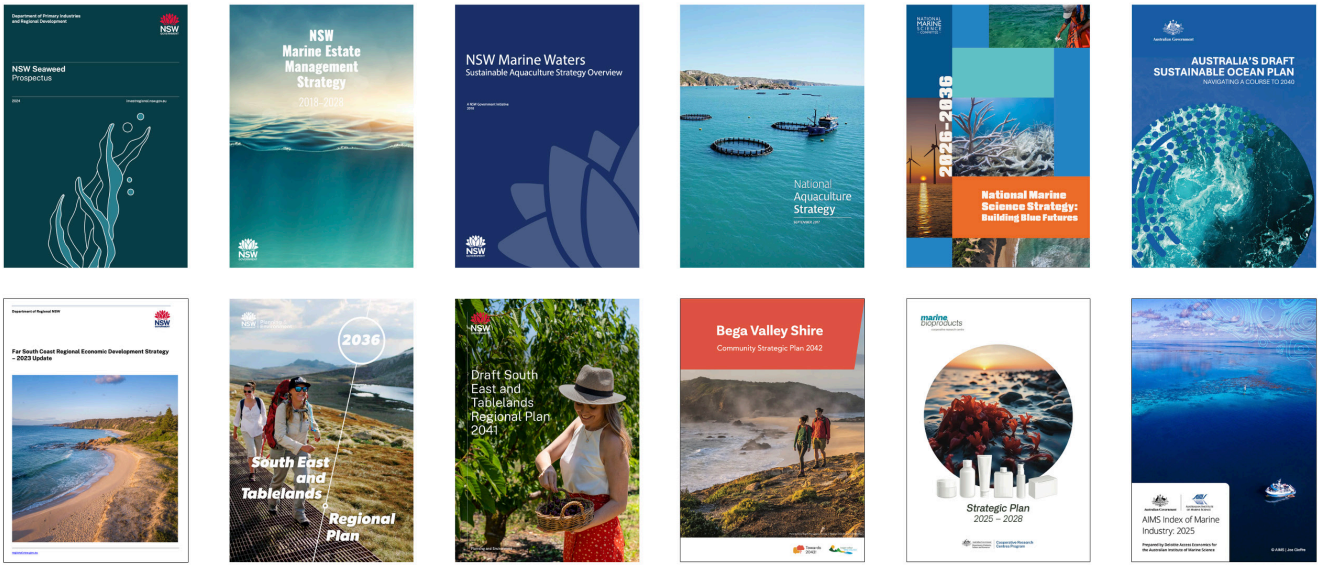


Figure 6: NSW, Bega Valley Shire and Commonwealth plans, strategies and documents that support the development of aquaculture and seaweed farming in NSW waters. For a link to a complete list of supporting government documents please click here.

7. Ocean Conditions

FY26 provided further evidence of consistent changes occurring in Australia's oceans. Sea surface temperatures across the Australian region during FY26 were the second-warmest on record. This followed record temperatures in FY25. During 2025 itself, Australian-region sea surface temperatures reached a new annual record, with the Tasman Sea averaging 1.1°C above the long-term average.

This was particularly relevant to Auskelp as the highest warming ocean areas continue to be around Eden. During autumn 2026, the Bureau of Meteorology recorded the waters of southeastern Australia at 2°C above average, with waters along the far south coast of NSW and eastern Tasmania reaching 3–4°C above average.

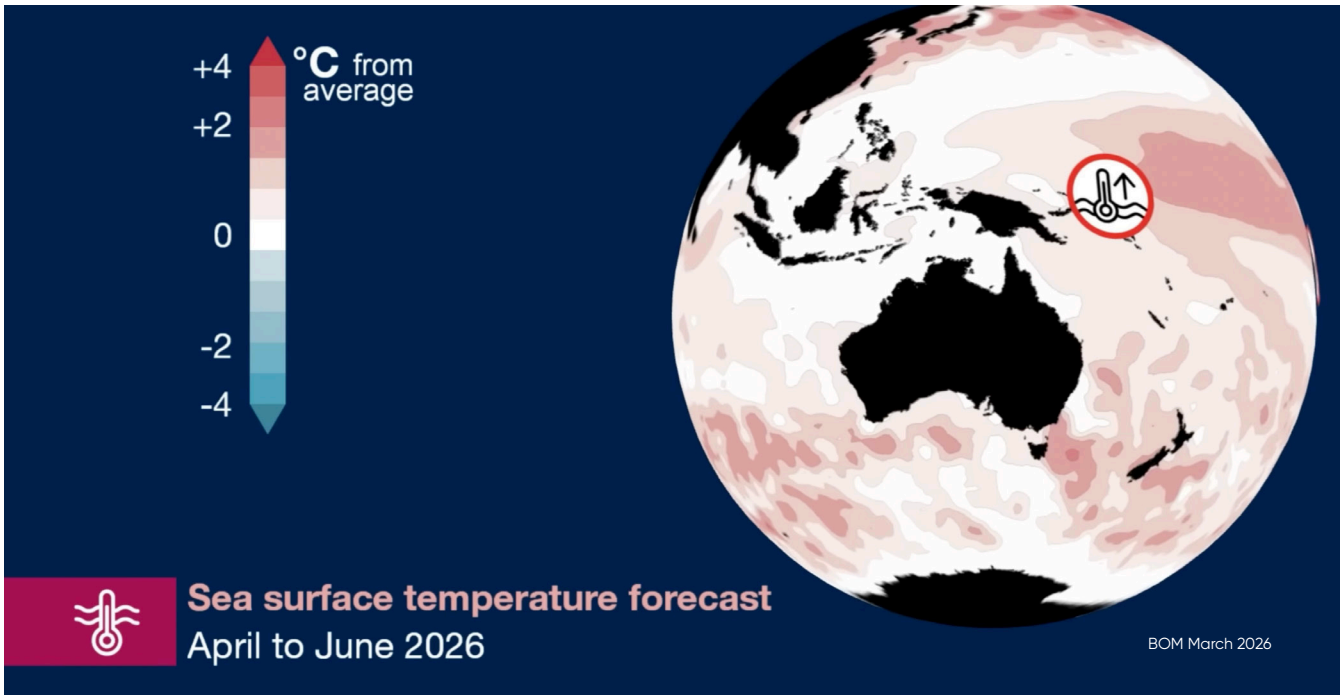


Figure 7: BOM Sea surface temperature forecast April to June 2026 (BOM March 2026).

These sea-surface conditions reinforce why Auskelp's long-term ocean testing program is important. We are not simply testing whether Golden Kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*) can grow in Disaster Bay and Twofold Bay; we are building a real-world understanding of how this important native species responds to higher temperatures, marine heatwaves, extreme storms, seasonal fouling and changing ocean conditions. This knowledge is critical for developing a resilient Australian kelp industry and it may also contribute to a better understanding of how Golden Kelp will be impacted as wild populations come under increasing environmental pressure.

8. Regulatory Approval Process

In March 2026, Auskelp lodged a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (**EIS**) for the Eden-1 kelp aquaculture farm, bringing together several years of research, ocean testing, environmental studies and consultation. The EIS was placed on public exhibition from 10 April to 8 May 2026.

The EIS included specialist assessment of marine ecology, benthic habitat, marine fauna, biosecurity, Aboriginal cultural heritage, navigation, hydrodynamics, visual impacts, coastal processes, marine mammals, waste, traffic, emergency response, environmental management and community consultation. Together, these studies provide a comprehensive analysis of the Project, the environment in which it would operate, and the measures Auskelp has committed to implement.

Community submissions

Public exhibition is an important part of the NSW planning process and gives the community, businesses and government agencies the opportunity to have their say. Eden-1 attracted considerable community interest, particularly from people living more than 100km from the Project area. **See the total submissions numbers below:**

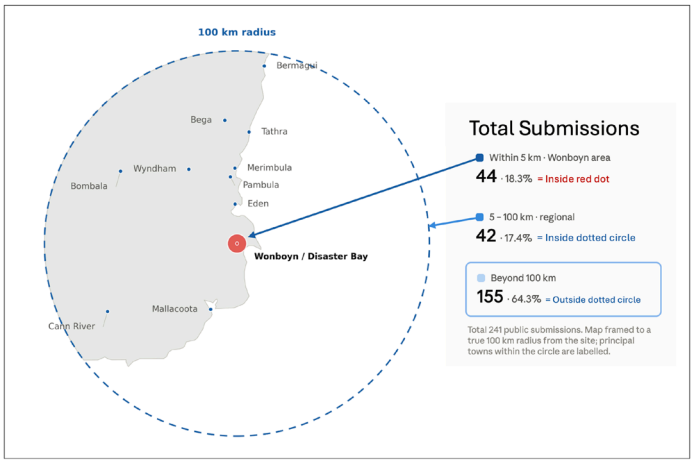


Table 2 Number of Submissions Received

Type	Support	Object	Comment	Total
Public	16	208	5	229
Organisation	7	4	0	11
Local Council	-	-	1	1
Agency Advice	-	-	14	14

Public submissions included submissions in support (23), objections (212) and general comments (5). All 212 objections have been comprehensively reviewed and analysed. The objections were categorised into 22 sections and are responded to in detail in the Submissions Response Report (**SRR**). The SRR comprehensively addresses all issues raised, providing additional scientific information and justification, and where appropriate, updates were made to management measures and project plans.

For more information, read the published Auskelp EIS and SRR here (click image to open PDF document):





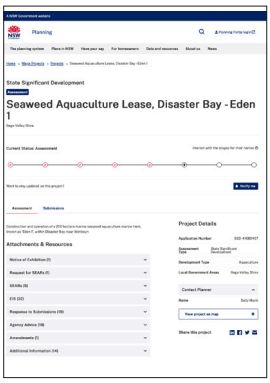
9. What Happens Next?

With the Environmental Impact Statement (**EIS**), public exhibition and Submissions Response Report (**SRR**) now complete, Eden-1 has entered the final stages of the NSW State Significant Development assessment process. The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (**DPHI**) will complete its whole-of-government assessment of the Project, taking into account the EIS, all public submissions, advice from government agencies, Auskelp's SRR and responses, and applicable government policies. It is our understanding that DPHI will finalise its Assessment Report and if approved will recommend conditions of consent. Whether approved or rejected, DPHI will then refer the application to the NSW Independent Planning Commission (**IPC**), which (due to the number of objections) will now be the consent authority for the Eden-1 project.

Based on DPHI's estimated timeline, referral to the IPC is anticipated around November 2026. Once referred, the IPC will appoint a Panel of Commissioners and commence its own independent consideration of the Project. The Commission typically meets with the applicant, DPHI and relevant Council, may undertake a local site inspection, and may seek further written submissions or hold a public meeting. The IPC is not bound by DPHI's recommendation or its proposed conditions; it must independently assess the Project on its merits and the substantiveness of objections, and may approve the development, impose or amend conditions of consent, or refuse the application.

Following final determination, the IPC will publish its decision and a Statement of Reasons explaining their decision. Subject to completion of the DPHI assessment and the proposed IPC process, a final determination is expected to be reached within in the coming months.

You can track the Eden-1 Project and view all the published documents on the NSW State Significant Development Planning Portal (click image below to open the portal):





10. Why is Kelp Farming Important?

Kelp aquaculture provides a pathway to environmental regeneration, climate action, and economic renewal. Especially when located in regions where wild kelp numbers are reducing and traditional industries (such as fishing and forestry) are in decline.

Australia is home to the Great Southern Reef, which stretches from northern New South Wales, around Tasmania, and across to Western Australia. Central to these ecosystems are extensive forests of Golden Kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*), which provide food, habitat, and ecological services to countless marine species.

Kelp farming is a simple, elegant and inherently natural form of production. Kelp needs no arable land, freshwater irrigation or synthetic fertiliser — it grows using sunlight and nutrients already present in the ocean. From this simple process comes an extraordinary renewable resource that can become food, agricultural biostimulants, animal nutrition and valuable marine compounds.

Its beauty lies in that simplicity. Auskelp seeks to grow a native marine plant in its natural environment, harvest it, and transform it into products that benefit people, agriculture and the environment. At the same time, kelp cultivation creates marine habitat, supports coastal employment and provides a secure source of kelp without harvesting wild forests.

Few industries offer such a straightforward proposition: sunlight, seawater and kelp — converted into useful products, regional jobs and a more circular economy.



Figure 8: Auskelp hatchery sporophyte production (Credit: Auskelp).

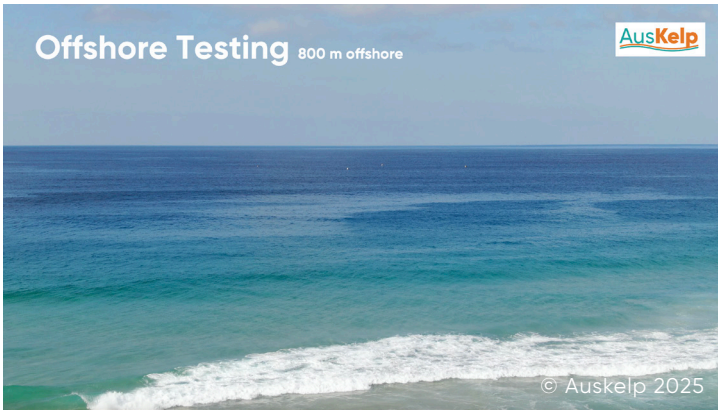


Figure 9: Auskelp test location, 800 m offshore, Disaster Bay (Credit: Auskelp).

11. Timeline

FY25

July – September

- Ongoing ocean testing
- Gametophyte production expanded
- Visit to Seasol factory in Victoria
- Study effects of ocean storms on wild kelp beds
- Direct seeding tests
- Review of community feedback
- EIS workshops - relevant federal, state and local legislation final review

October – December

- Kelp packaging tests
- Biomass and fouling models completed
- Laboratory facilities expanded
- Scientific team increased
- Dive on kelp rigs
- Seafloor survey
- Ocean traffic modelling
- Kelp biological analysis (ongoing)
- Commissioned additional EIS external reports

January – March

- Cryo-packaging and stabilisation protocols
- EPBC submission to DCCEEW
- Upgrade to direct seeding equipment
- NSW departmental reviews
- Business modelling completed
- Presentations to Victorian Windfarm proponents
- Bega Circular Valley presentations
- SSD documentation ongoing
- Reports completed: Risk assessment models, Emergency response plan, Cultural heritage response plan, Waste management plan, Environmental management plan, Monitoring and maintenance plan, Traffic management plan, and Biosecurity plan

April – June

- Final Draft of EIS Completed
- Updates and consultation with registered aboriginal parties
- Marine fauna interaction plan approved
- Ocean seeding and output trials continue
- Auskelp accepted as core partner of MBCRC
- Partnership with Ocean2Earth
- Review of post storm biomass
- Fertiliser testing program commenced
- Land based facilities finalised
- DCCEEW confirmed Eden-1 is a non-controlled action
- KPMG R&D review

FY26

July – September

- Continued ocean testing and monitoring of kelp infrastructure
- 13.1 m peak wave height during East Coast Low
- First Eden-1 FAQ published
- Marine Bioproducts CRC Conference presentation
- Continued EIS development and specialist technical assessments
- Community and stakeholder engagement

October – December

- Benthic survey and fish assessment
- MBCRC leadership team visit to Eden-1
- Wonboyn community information session
- Test farm harvest completed
- EIS issued for independent peer and REAP review
- Biostimulant processing trials with Ocean2Earth
- Food-grade kelp and cryo-pack testing
- Second Eden-1 FAQ published
- Alginate, fucoidan and laminarin testing
- Presentation to Dr Michael Holland, Member for Bega
- New kelp shredding and processing systems developed

January – March

- 2026 expanded ocean testing program
- Presentation and participation at EvokeAG
- Deakin University research partnership established
- Eden-1 Environmental Impact Statement completed and submitted
- Lumen Christi College presentation
- Eden hatchery facilities expanded
- Continued food, biostimulant and processing R&D
- Maritime Archaeology Assessment completed

April – June

- Eden-1 EIS publicly exhibited
- Eden RDC construction commences
- AIDP grant awarded
- Maritime Archaeology Assessment completed
- ABC radio, WIN News interviews
- Additional scientific and regulatory material prepared in response to agency and community submissions
- Public submission technical responses prepared
- SRR completed
- New documents: Assessment of Significance Report, Biosecurity Risk Assessment, Knowledge Gaps Uncertainty Register, Social Impact Assessment Report, Technical Testing Report, Maritime Archaeology Assessment

12. What's Happening in FY27

July 2026 – June 2027

- Continued ocean testing
- Completion of Eden Research Development Centre
- Provision of further reports and documentation for the Planning Secretary and DPHI
- Additional responses to agency advice
- DPHI to complete its assessment of Eden-1 for Project referral, including its Assessment Report and recommended conditions, to the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) - expected by November 2026
- Independent Planning Commission assessment and determination of Eden-1 Kelp Aquaculture Farm project, completing the SSD development consent process - expected before March 2027





If you have any questions or would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please email: info@auskelp.net

Further information is available on our website: www.auskelp.net

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