

# SCALES OF JUSTICE

The only international aquaculture lawyer in the world, Woodcroft's *Katherine Hawes* advises The Hague with a Greater Sydney heart.

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The only international aquaculture lawyer in the world, advisor to The Hague and global "fish lawyer" is elated. The subject of Katherine Hawes' excitement is what looks like waterlogged quinoa.

The handfuls of slimy grey and brown stuff is the achievement of a school in Mexico where students learn sustainable aquaculture skills through a course operated by the independent NGO headed by Hawes, Aquaculture Without Frontiers (AWF).

"We've got our first oyster larvae!"

This is one example of how Hawes is helping to reshape and regulate the future of the marine and aquaculture industry (the "blue economy") through her involvement in education and reform. Her position is unique.

While some large firms dabble in the aquaculture industry, Hawes is the only international marine and aquaculture lawyer.

Her Aquarium Lawyers represents large international clients such as feed suppliers, sea miners and telecommunications companies.

It has shipbuilders, cruise liners and houseboat owners, boat buyers and sellers, diving businesses and jet pack operators, as well as importers and exporters on its books.

There are those needing marine employment contracts; advice on salvage operations; fisheries prosecution defence; and oceanic medicine ownership guidance.

But most of Hawes' clients are salty seafarers, generations-old small family businesses.

"They get up at four in the morning, go out fishing, come back and sell it," she says. "It's all centred around the culture, and they don't do much else."

Marine law is based on the 1548 law of the sea, which gives every seafarer the right of passage through water, stipulates that anything within the sea is for all of mankind and judges maritime boundaries 200 nautical miles from the lowest occupied land point.

Unlike land – which has clearly defined borders, most of the great deep is governed by international law which has no police force, raising questions on issues like deep sea fish farm licencing; jurisdiction over sea cabling, mining and pontoons; traceability; and international labelling standards.

Organisations like the Association of International Seafood Professionals (AISP), for which the "fish lawyer" is legal counsel, aim to solve those challenges.

Established by AWF (remember the oyster larvae), AISP unites like associations into one international voice.

In May it will hold a seafood supply chain summit to show how ocean and human health are interconnected.

Since becoming a barrister at age 24, Hawes has appeared before the full bench of the High Court, guest lectures at universities and has been World Aquaculture Society Asian Pacific Chapter executive committee treasurer and secretary.

She has Masters degrees in Maritime Law, Law and Adult Education, is

studying an MBA in Marine and Shipping and will sit the New York Bar exam in February.

She also operates Digital Age Lawyers specialising in media and defamation law, which may seem a thousand leagues away from matters of the high sea.

However, Hawes cites the case of a ship owner fined because a deckhand posted a video on the internet of himself shooting endangered seagulls.

"All I had to do was look at it on YouTube. You can't be out in the remote seas and think that nobody's looking anymore. Everybody's looking."

Not long back from a presentation in India when she spoke with *Greater Sydney Living* in August, Hawes' short-term schedule includes meetings in Malaysia and Singapore, a conference in Paris on sustainability and meetings in The Hague about damming the Mekong River in China.

She is also gearing up for the World Fisheries Congress scientific and fishing equipment tradeshow in Adelaide in October 2020.

Despite the global focus, Hawes still lives at Woodcroft, not far from her parents and her school days at St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Rooty Hill, and Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta.

"Just a bit" ambitious, Hawes challenges the status quo at every turn and encourages other western Sydney people, especially girls, to "learn how to position yourself and be assertive".

"Stamp your feet until you get what you want." \*