

# **Algal Bioproducts – Investigating the Effect of Light Quality on Metabolite Production by Photosynthetic Diatoms**

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## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I, Kenji Iwasaki declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Climate Change Cluster, Faculty of Science at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. I certify that this document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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## **Preface**

This thesis has been prepared in publication format, whereby each chapter represents a manuscript ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Therefore, there will be some duplication in Introduction and Materials and Methods. At present, no individual chapter has been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

## Table of Content

Algal Bioproducts – Investigating the Effect of Light Quality on Metabolite Production by Photosynthetic Diatoms .....	i
Certificate of Original Authorship .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Preface.....	iv
Table of Content.....	v
List of Figures .....	x
List of Tables.....	xix
Abstract of Thesis .....	xxi
Chapter 1 General Introduction.....	1
1.1. Introduction to Microalgae.....	1
1.2. Physiology and Importance of Diatoms.....	2
1.2.1. Importance of Diatoms in Aquaculture.....	5
1.2.2. Importance of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> in Australian Aquaculture.....	8
1.2.3. Photosynthetic Mechanisms in Diatoms.....	10
1.3. Photosynthesis in Microalgae .....	11
1.4. Dynamics of CO <sub>2</sub> Availability in Microalgal Culture .....	15
1.5. Dynamics of Light Availability in Microalgal Culture .....	18
1.5.1. Light quality in aquatic environments.....	20
1.5.2. How Diatoms Respond to Light Intensity.....	21
1.5.3. Mechanisms to sense light quality in diatoms.....	22
1.6. Light Emitting Diodes as Light Source for Culturing Diatoms .....	24
1.6.1. Using light emitting diodes to manipulate biochemical content in diatoms ..	25
1.7. Summary .....	26
1.8. Aims of Thesis .....	26
1.9. Thesis structure .....	27
1.10. Ethics and Permits .....	28
1.11. References .....	28
Chapter 2 Light and CO <sub>2</sub> availability to enhance growth rate in the diatom <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> for aquaculture .....	49
2.1. Introduction.....	49
2.1.1. Diatoms as feed for aquaculture.....	49

2.1.2.	How diatoms respond to light .....	51
2.1.3.	How light effects diatom growth.....	52
2.1.4.	Light limitations in current aquaculture practices.....	54
2.1.5.	Light emitting diodes and their potential role in aquaculture .....	57
2.1.6.	Measuring steady-state light curves .....	58
2.1.7.	Carbon limitation in current aquaculture practices .....	59
2.2.	Aims and Objectives .....	61
2.3.	Material and Methods .....	62
2.3.1.	Culturing <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	62
2.3.2.	Photobioreactor setup.....	63
2.3.3.	Experimental design.....	65
2.3.4.	Steady-state light curve measurements .....	67
2.3.5.	Dissolved oxygen measurements using optical sensors and measuring net photosynthesis .....	68
2.3.6.	Automated <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> growth measurements .....	69
2.3.7.	Light attenuation measurements .....	70
2.3.8.	Dissolved inorganic carbon.....	71
2.3.9.	Modelling net photosynthesis of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	71
2.4.	Results.....	72
2.4.1.	Steady-state light curve of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	72
2.4.2.	Growth rates of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> under different light and CO <sub>2</sub> availability.....	73
2.4.3.	Modelling light availability of two LED configurations.....	77
2.4.4.	Net photosynthesis rates of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> under varying light and carbon availability.....	82
2.4.5.	Observing carbon availability .....	86
2.5.	Discussion .....	87
2.5.1.	Growth .....	88
2.5.2.	Net photosynthesis .....	90
2.6.	Conclusion .....	91
2.7.	References .....	92
2.8.	Supplementary Materials .....	106

Chapter 3 Investigating the Effect of Light Quality on Primary Metabolite Production by <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	109
3.1. Introduction .....	109
3.1.1. Diatoms .....	109
3.1.2. Importance of diatoms in aquaculture.....	110
3.1.3. Importance of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> in aquaculture .....	112
3.1.4. Light emitting diodes and their potential role in aquaculture .....	113
3.1.5. Selecting light quality to grow microalgae .....	114
3.1.6. Defining cost efficiencies in using LEDs for microalgae culturing.....	117
3.1.7. Balancing light quality .....	119
3.1.8. Measuring photosynthetic performance from cultures grown using different light qualities .....	121
3.1.9. Light quality research in diatoms.....	122
3.2. Aims and Objectives .....	124
3.3. Material and Methods .....	125
3.3.1. Culturing <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	125
3.3.2. Photobioreactor system .....	125
3.3.3. Growth light .....	126
3.3.4. Calculating growth rate .....	128
3.3.5. Light measurements and calibration .....	130
3.3.6. Dissolved oxygen measurements and measuring net photosynthesis using optical sensors .....	131
3.3.7. Rapid light curve measurement.....	132
3.3.8. Pigment analysis with high performance liquid chromatography.....	134
3.3.9. Sample preparation for protein, lipid and carbohydrate analysis.....	135
3.3.10. Total protein analysis from total nitrogen measurements.....	136
3.3.11. Total lipid and fatty acid methyl ester extraction and analysis .....	136
3.3.12. Total carbohydrate analysis .....	137
3.3.13. Cost efficiency of different light qualities.....	138
3.4. Results.....	139
3.4.1. Effects of light quality on <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> growth.....	139
3.4.2. Light attenuation in <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> cultures .....	141

3.4.3.	Primary metabolic composition of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> grown with different light qualities .....	143
3.4.4.	Effects of light quality on the FAME composition of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	145
3.4.5.	Effects of different light quality on the pigment composition of <i>C. muelleri</i> .....	146
3.4.6.	Light quality and production efficiency .....	147
3.4.7.	Effects of different light quality on net photosynthesis rates of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	151
3.4.8.	Effects of light quality on rapid light curve .....	153
3.5.	Discussion .....	157
3.5.1.	Growth .....	157
3.5.2.	Metabolite production .....	159
3.5.3.	Pigments.....	159
3.5.4.	Photosynthesis.....	162
3.5.5.	Cost efficiency .....	164
3.6.	Conclusions.....	165
3.7.	References .....	166
3.8.	Supplementary Materials .....	186
Chapter 4 Change in photon diet – Light quality shifting to tailor metabolite content and their digestibility in <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....		187
4.1.	Introduction .....	187
4.1.1.	Diatoms in aquaculture .....	187
4.1.2.	Selecting light quality to grow diatoms in aquaculture.....	188
4.1.3.	Light shifting in microalgae .....	189
4.1.4.	Light shifts in diatoms.....	192
4.1.5.	Digestibility analysis.....	193
4.2.	Aims and Objectives .....	196
4.3.	Material and Methods .....	197
4.3.1.	Culturing <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	197
4.3.2.	Photobioreactor system .....	198
4.3.3.	Growth light .....	199
4.3.4.	Growth rate.....	200



4.3.5. Light attenuation measurements .....	202
4.3.6. Rapid light curve measurements .....	202
4.3.7. Pigment analysis with HPLC .....	205
4.3.8. <i>In vitro</i> digestion assay.....	206
4.3.9. Sample preparation for protein and lipid analysis.....	208
4.3.10. Total protein analysis from total nitrogen measurements .....	209
4.3.11. Total lipid and fatty acid methyl ester extraction and analysis .....	209
4.4. Results.....	211
4.4.1. Effects of light shift on <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> growth.....	211
4.4.2. Light attenuations of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> culture.....	213
4.4.3. Effects of light shift on rapid light curve parameters of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	214
4.4.4. Effect light shift on the pigment composition of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	216
4.4.5. Primary metabolic composition of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> with light shift ..	217
4.4.6. Digestibility of desired metabolites .....	218
4.4.7. Effects of light shift on the fatty acid methyl ester composition of <i>Chaetoceros muelleri</i> .....	221
4.4.8. Digestibility of fatty acid methyl ester.....	222
4.5. Discussion .....	224
4.5.1. Growth rate.....	225
4.5.2. Metabolite production .....	226
4.5.3. Digestibility.....	228
4.5.4. Pigments.....	229
4.5.5. Photosynthesis.....	230
4.6. Conclusions.....	232
4.7. References .....	233
4.8. Supplementary Materials .....	248
Chapter 5 General Discussion.....	251
5.1. Key Findings .....	252
5.1.1. Chapter 2 .....	252
5.1.2. Chapter 3 .....	253
5.1.3. Chapter 4 .....	254
5.2. Future Research.....	254

5.2.1.	Chapter 2 .....	255
5.2.2.	Chapter 3 .....	255
5.2.3.	Chapter 4 .....	256
5.3.	Conclusion .....	257
5.4.	References .....	258

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Scanning electron image of different diatom species. A. <i>Thalassiosira pseudonana</i> , B. <i>Cocconeis</i> sp. C. <i>Lampricus</i> sp. D. <i>Gyosigma balticum</i> , E. <i>Cyclotella cryptica</i> , F. <i>Nitzschia</i> sp. G. <i>Thalassiosira weissflogii</i> , H. <i>Achnanthes</i> sp. Image from Hildebrand <i>et al.</i> (2012).....	2
Figure 1.2	Venn diagram representing shared/unique gene families in <i>Phaeodactylum tricornutum</i> , <i>Thalassiosira pseudonana</i> , <i>Viridiplantae</i> and red algae and other eukaryotes (including chromalveolates and opisthokonta (fungi and metazoan)). Gene families consisting of a single gene is denoted ‘orphans’. Image from Bowler <i>et al.</i> (2008). .....	4
Figure 1.3	Docosahexaenoic acid structure. Image from Ruxton <i>et al.</i> , (2007). .....	7
Figure 1.4	Average percentage of DHA, EPA, arachidonic acid (ARA) in 40 microalgae species held in the Australian National Algae Culture Collection. Image from Blackburn and Volkman, (2012). .....	8
Figure 1.5	Simplified scheme of photosynthesis water is consumed in the light reaction to produce oxygen, NADPH and ATP, which are then consumed alongside CO <sub>2</sub> to produce carbohydrates. Image from Masojídek, Torzillo and Koblížek (2013). .....	13
Figure 1.6	Carbon fixation and photorespiration pathways catalysed by RuBisCO, ribulose-1,5-biphosphate (RuBP) and both CO <sub>2</sub> or O <sub>2</sub> . In carbon fixation, the first stable product is 3-phosphoglycerate (PGA), and in photorespiration, the first stable product is a molecule of PGA and 2-phosphoglycolate (PG). Both reactions are facilitated by NADPH and ATP produced during the light stage of photosynthesis. Image from Bloom (2009).....	14
Figure 1.7	A schematic diagram of the carbon equilibrium in a PBR, where gaseous CO <sub>2</sub> and O <sub>2</sub> are introduced to the cultures and equilibrates with the CO <sub>2</sub> and O <sub>2</sub>	

- produced by the microalgae during photosynthesis (P) and photorespiration (R) at an overall mass transfer rate ( $k_{LA}$ ). Image from Tamburic *et al.* (2015). ..... 17
- Figure 1.8 The electromagnetic spectrum is shown, with the visible spectrum range (380 to 750 nm) enlarged. Within the visible range the photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) exists between 400 to 700 nm. Image from Masojídek, Torzillo and Koblížek (2013). ..... 19
- Figure 1.9 Rate of light transmission is dependent on the depth (metres) and wavelength (nm) of the light. In clear oceans the light becomes increasingly dominated by blue/green wavelengths at depths beyond 45 metres. Image adapted from Levine and MacNichol (1982). ..... 21
- Figure 2.1 Simplified relationship of increasing light intensity and cell growth of microalgae where regions are 1) light limited region where light is too low to grow, 2) region between light limited and light saturated ( $I_s$ ) where growth increases with light intensity 3) light saturated region where no increase in growth is seen with an increase in light intensity 4) photoinhibited ( $I_d$ ) region where a decrease in growth is seen with an increase in light intensity. Image from Carvalho *et al.*, 2011. .... 53
- Figure 2.2 Schematic of ePBR. Light is provided with a white LED array and culture temperature is controlled with a peltier jacket. pH, dissolved oxygen and temperature is measured with sensors. The culture was mixed with a magnetic stirrer. Image from Tamburic *et al.*, 2014. .... 64
- Figure 2.3 Side view schematic of experimental design. A) LL-CO<sub>2</sub>: LED illumination from the top (Top-LED) with no CO<sub>2</sub> addition. B) LL+CO<sub>2</sub>: LED illumination with Top-LED with CO<sub>2</sub> addition. C) HL-CO<sub>2</sub>: LED illumination from both sides (Side-LED) with no CO<sub>2</sub> addition. D) HL+CO<sub>2</sub>: LED illumination with Side-LED with CO<sub>2</sub> addition. All conditions were constantly aerated. .... 66
- Figure 2.4 Steady-state light curve (SSLC) of *C. muelleri* grown under standard growth conditions (section 2.4.1). Black dots indicate mean values of relative electron transfer rates (rETR) at each irradiance level, error bars indicate standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ) and red line indicates the fitted Platt function (Eqn. 2.4). Parameter values:  $\alpha = 0.278 \pm 0.007$ ,  $rETR_{max} = 59.867 \pm 1.877$ ,  $I_k = 215.5 \pm 9.614$ . .... 72

- Figure 2.5 The cell density for each condition as a function of time is shown in paired graphs (above and below), where: the black dots indicate mean cell density, error bars indicate standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ), the red line indicates the logistic function applied (Eqn. 2.5). Panels represent A) LL-CO<sub>2</sub> (low light without CO<sub>2</sub> addition), B) LL+CO<sub>2</sub> (low light with CO<sub>2</sub> addition), C) HL-CO<sub>2</sub> (high light without CO<sub>2</sub> addition) and D) HL+CO<sub>2</sub> (high light with CO<sub>2</sub> addition). ..... 73
- Figure 2.6 Measured photon flux density (PFD) values for each light condition as a function of cell density is shown where: the black circles indicate the measured PFD value (error bars indicate standard deviation ( $n = 3$ )) and the blue line indicates the fitted decay function and the red dotted line indicates 0 irradiance (Eqn. 2.7). LL samples had a path length of 20 cm (left panel) and HL cultures had a path length of 2.5 cm (right panel). ..... 77
- Figure 2.7 Modelled rate of light attenuation of two light conditions across the relevant path lengths: 20 cm for Top-LED (left panel) and 2.5 cm for Side-LED (right panel) with each line (blue, orange, green, red, purple, brown and pink) corresponding to incrementally increasing cell density ( $1 \times 10^6 \text{ mL}^{-1}$ ): 0, 0.5, 1, 2, 4, 8 and 12 respectively. Black dotted line indicates  $I_k$  ( $215.5 \pm 9.614$ ) (Calculated from Figure 2.4). ..... 79
- Figure 2.8 Modelled data of photosynthetic activity shown for each condition: A) Top-LED and B) Side-LED based on model explained in Eqn. 2.8 where black line indicates the rETR as a function of cell density of each culture, the dotted blue line indicates the initial cell density and red dotted line indicates the theoretical cell density limit where nitrogen is depleted. Modelled data assumes CO<sub>2</sub> replete conditions. .... 81
- Figure 2.9 An example dataset showing a typical spike in the dissolved oxygen (DO) in  $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ , which was used to calculate net photosynthesis (photosynthesis – respiration). Dissolved oxygen equilibrium between microalgae photosynthesis during ‘Bubbling On’, aeration stopped during ‘Bubbling Off’ and photosynthetic DO is allowed to accumulate, DO equilibrium is allowed to be re-established once aeration restarts with ‘Bubbling On’. ..... 82
- Figure 2.10 Example dataset of dissolved oxygen (DO) represented with a black line during the light phase in early exponential phase with DO spikes occurring every 2 hr for 10 min (red zones indicate ‘Bubbling Off’ as in Figure 2.9). Small

- decreases in DO are due to CO<sub>2</sub> dosages, as shown by the pH data represented with a blue dashed line where a decrease in pH corresponds to CO<sub>2</sub> dosage. Grey zones indicate the dark phase. .... 84
- Figure 2.11 The calculated net photosynthetic oxygen production rates ..... 85
- Figure 2.12 Representative data of pH (red line) and calculated HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> concentrations (blue broken line) of *C. muelleri* grown in conditions A) LL-CO<sub>2</sub>, B) HL-CO<sub>2</sub> and C) LL+CO<sub>2</sub> and HL+CO<sub>2</sub>. Grey areas indicate dark phase while white areas indicates light phase. .... 87
- Figure 2.13 The relative absorption spectra of *C. muelleri* represented with brown line and the spectra of the two LEDs used in this study: Top-LED represented as a broken black line and Side-LED represented as a black dotted line. .... 106
- Figure 2.14 View of the LED chips and their arrangements in the custom LED panel used in the study. The larger chips are the CREE® XLamp® XM-L Color and the smaller chips are the Cree® XLamp® XP-E photo-red. .... 107
- Figure 2.15 Comparison of conventional light sources with white LEDs of varying spectra. Power consumption (W), maximum intensity in lumens (lm), light output (lm/W), energy conversion efficiency (%) and theoretical maximum output (lm/W) are shown. Sourced from article published on DIAL website (<https://www.dial.de/en/blog/article/efficiency-of-ledsthe-highest-luminous-efficacy-of-a-white-led/>). .... 108
- Figure 3.1 Wavelength spectra of LEDs used in experiment and the relative absorption spectra of *C. muelleri*. Brown line represents the absorption spectra of *C. muelleri*, blue dotted line represents blue LED spectra, green 'line & dot' style line represents green LED spectra, red broken line represents red LED spectra, and black 'long line & short line' style line represents white LED spectra. .... 127
- Figure 3.2 Schematic of ePBR geometry (inverted conical frustum) and light measurement. A quantum 4π sensor were used to measure PFD *in situ*. There are three LED chips in each LED panel mounted at the front and back of ePBR vessel. LED illumination is showed for demonstrative purposes and are not illustrative of the actual LED emission angles. .... 130
- Figure 3.3 Cell density are shown as a function of time for four light qualities of equal photosynthetically utilized radiation (500 μmol photons m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>). Blue circles indicate cultures grown using blue light (BL), green inverted triangles indicate

cultures grown using green light (GL), red squares indicate cultures grown using red light (RL) and black triangles indicate cultures grown using white light (WL). The data points prior to day zero indicate the cell density of the starting inoculum of cultures before the first experimental cell count (day one). The black dotted line indicates the target cell density of  $> 6 \times 10^6$  cells mL<sup>-1</sup> for metabolite analysis. Values represent the mean and standard deviation (n = 5).

..... 140

Figure 3.4 Irradiance measured *in situ* from cultures grown using different light qualities as a function of time. Blue circles represent BL, green inverted triangles represent GL, red squares represent RL and black triangles represent WL. Note that RL cultures were grown for five days and BL, GL and WL cultures were grown for three days, as growth rates were significantly lower and was hence grown for longer to harvest enough biomass for analysis. Irradiance at  $t_0$  represents the irradiance levels in media with no cells as detailed in section 3.3.5. Values represent the mean and standard deviation (n = 5)..... 142

Figure 3.5 Cellular content of total dry biomass (mg mL<sup>-1</sup>) on the left y-axis, total protein, lipid and carbohydrates (mg mg<sup>-1</sup>) on the right y-axis are shown for each light quality used to grow *C. muelleri*. Red bars with diagonal patterns represent dry weight, blue bars with horizontal patterns represent total protein, orange bars with vertical patterns represent total lipid and green bars with cross patterns represent total carbohydrates. Values represent mean and standard deviation of total metabolite samples (n = 3) and dry biomass samples (n = 9). One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: the same letter indicates no significant difference, or if no letters are present, no significant differences between conditions were detected, and different letters indicate significant difference between light treatments. .... 144

Figure 3.6 Fatty acid methyl ester (FAME) content per mg dry weight ( $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1}$ ) of *C. muelleri* grown using different light qualities. Blue bars: BL cultures, green bars: GL cultures, red bars: RL cultures and black bars: WL cultures. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Values represents mean and standard deviation (n = 3). .... 145

- Figure 3.7 Pigment content per culture volume ( $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ ) of *C. muelleri* harvested after grown using different light qualities. Values are mean and error bars indicating standard deviation ( $n = 5$ ). Blue bars: BL grown cultures, green bars: GL grown cultures, red bars: RL grown cultures and black bars: WL grown cultures. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: the same letter indicates no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference..... 147
- Figure 3.8 Dry biomass ( $\text{mg mL}^{-1} \text{kWh}^{-1}$ ; left y-axis) and total metabolite ( $\text{mg mg}^{-1} \text{kWh}^{-1}$ ; right y-axis) yield based on power consumption for each light quality is shown. Red bars with diagonal patterns represent dry weight, blue bars with horizontal patterns represent total protein, orange bars with vertical patterns represent total lipid and green bars with cross patterns represent total carbohydrates. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: the same letter indicates no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Values represent mean and standard deviation of total metabolite samples ( $n = 3$ ) and dry biomass samples ( $n = 9$ ). ..... 148
- Figure 3.9 FAME content based on power consumption ( $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1} \text{kWh}^{-1}$ ) for each light quality is shown. Blue bars: BL grown cultures, green bars: GL grown cultures, red bars: RL grown cultures and black bars: WL grown cultures. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Values represents mean and standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ). ..... 149
- Figure 3.10 Pigment content as a function of power consumption ( $\mu\text{g L}^{-1} \text{kWh}^{-1}$ ) for each light quality is shown. Blue bars: BL grown cultures, green bars: GL grown cultures, red bars: RL grown cultures and black bars: WL grown cultures. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Values are mean and error bars indicating standard deviation ( $n = 5$ ). ..... 150

- Figure 3.11 Net photosynthesis of cultures grown using different light qualities as a function of time. Blue circle: BL grown cultures, green inverted triangle: GL grown cultures, red squares: RL grown cultures and black triangles: WL grown cultures. Dotted line indicates zero net photosynthesis. Values represent mean and standard deviation ( $n = 5$ )..... 152
- Figure 3.12 Rapid light curve plot parameters where  $\Phi_{PSII}$  (maximum quantum yield of photosystem II) are shown in boxes a, b, c and d,  $rETR_{max}$  (relative maximum electron transfer rate) in boxes e, f, g and h and NPQ (non-photochemical quenching) in boxes i, j, k and l. Condition blue light are shown in boxes a, e, and i, green light in boxes b, f and j, red light in boxes c, g, and k, and white light in boxes d, h and l. Measurements were taken at day one ( $t_0$ ) represented as blue circles and at day three ( $t_f$ ) represented as red squares. All samples at  $t_f$  were diluted with F/2 media to achieve similar  $F_0$  values prior to the measurement. Values represent mean and standard deviation ( $n = 5$ )..... 154
- Figure 3.13 View of the LED chips and their arrangements in the custom LED panel used in the study. The larger chips are the CREE® XLamp® XM-L Color and the smaller chips are the Cree® XLamp® XP-E photo-red. .... 186
- Figure 4.1 Conceptual diagram of a) traditional illumination of microalgae with white light b) illumination with constant red light c) a light shift from blue light to red light which induces an increase in division in *Chlamydomonas vulgaris* by increasing cell volume in blue light and subsequently shifting to red light to induce division (image adapted by Ooms *et al.* 2016; original image from Kim *et al.* 2014). .... 190
- Figure 4.2 Wavelength spectra of LEDs used in experiment and the relative absorption spectra of *C. muelleri*. Brown line represents the absorption spectra of *C. muelleri*, blue dotted line represents blue LED spectra, red broken line represents red LED spectra, and black ‘long line & short line’ style line represents white LED spectra..... 200
- Figure 4.3 Cell concentration as a function of time and treatment. Black dots: cell count data, coloured shades indicating the light quality of growth light: blue for blue light, red for red light, white for white light and grey for dark phase. A) Constant blue light (BLctrl), B) BL shifted to red light for 10 h during day three (BLRL), C) constant white light (WLctrl) and D) WL shifted to red light for 10 h during



day three (WLRL). Values represents the mean and standard deviation (n = 7).

.....211

Figure 4.4 Rate of light attenuation of different light qualities as a function of time. Blue circles: blue light grown (BL), blue squares: blue light grown subsequently red shifted on day three shown as blue/red square (BLRL), black circles: white light grown (WL) and black squares: white light grown subsequently red shifted on day three shown as black/red square (WLRL). Irradiance at  $t_0$  represents the initial irradiances as detailed in section 4.3.3. Grey area indicates dark phase and white area indicates light phase. Values represents the mean and standard deviation (n = 7). .....213

Figure 4.5 Rapid light curve plots where  $\Phi_{PSII}$  (a, b, c, d) is maximum electron transfer rate,  $rETR_{max}$  (e, f, g, h) is maximum quantum yield of photosystem II and NPQ (i, j, k, l) is non-photochemical quenching. Condition are grouped as: BLctrl (a, e, i), BLRL (b, f, j), WLctrl (c, g, k) and WLRL (d, h, l). Rapid light curve measurements were taken at day one ( $t_0$ ) represented as blue circle and at 3 time points at day three ( $t_f$ ): 0 h ( $t_{f0}$ ), 5 h ( $t_{f5}$ ) and 8 h after light shift ( $t_{f8}$ ); represented as red square, black inverted triangle and orange triangle respectively. All samples at  $T_f$  were diluted with F/2 media by  $\frac{1}{4}$  as to not oversaturate the measurement. Values represents the mean and standard deviation (n = 7). .....215

Figure 4.6 Pigment content of *C. muelleri* harvested after grown in different light qualities in  $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ . Blue bars: BLctrl, green bars: BLRL, black bars: WLctrl and orange: WLRL. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Values represents the mean and standard deviation (n = 7). .....217

Figure 4.7 Total and released protein and FAME from undigested and digested *C. muelleri* cultures grown under different light qualities. Blue bars with horizontal line pattern represent total protein in  $\text{mg mg}^{-1}$  dry weight (left y-axis), red bars with cross line pattern represent total FAME in  $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1}$  dry weight (right y-axis), green bars with diagonal line pattern represent released protein in  $\text{mg mg}^{-1}$  dry weight, and yellow bars with diagonal crossing line pattern represent

released FAME in  $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1}$  dry weight. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Values represents the mean and standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ). ..... 219

Figure 4.8 Percentage digested protein and total FAME shown where blue bars with horizontal line pattern represent total protein and red bars with crossing line pattern represent total FAME. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Values represents the mean and standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ). ..... 220

Figure 4.9 Total and released individual fatty acid species from undigested and digested *C. muelleri* cultures grown under different light qualities in  $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1}$  dry weight. Total FAME is represented by coloured bars with no line pattern, and released FAME is shown with diagonal line pattern. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Data represents the mean  $\pm$  standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ). ..... 222

Figure 4.10 Percentage FAME digestibility of *C. muelleri* grown under different light qualities are shown. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference, different letters indicate significant difference, and where no letters are present no significant differences were detected between conditions. Data represents the mean  $\pm$  standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ). ..... 224

Figure 4.11 Total lipids from undigested and digested *C. muelleri* cultures grown under different light qualities. Purple bars with horizontal patterns represent total lipids in  $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1}$  dry weight from undigested samples and green bars with crossing patterns represent total lipids in  $\mu\text{g mg}^{-1}$  dry weight from digested samples. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: no letters indicate no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Data represents the mean  $\pm$  standard deviation ( $n = 3$ ). ..... 250

## List of Tables

Table 1.1 Main chlorophyll, carotenoid and phycobilin of phototrophs. Image from Yen <i>et al.</i> (2013). .....	10
Table 2.1 Specific growth rate ( $\mu$ ), division rate ( $t_d$ ) and final cell density ( $t_f$ density) of <i>C. muelleri</i> in four different conditions LL-CO <sub>2</sub> , LL+CO <sub>2</sub> , HL-CO <sub>2</sub> and HL+CO <sub>2</sub> (mean $\pm$ stdev). One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Values shown are the mean and standard deviation (n = 3). .....	75
Table 2.2 Comparison of growth rate of <i>C. muelleri</i> grown indoors in different light and carbon availabilities. Light intensity ( $\mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ ), method of CO <sub>2</sub> addition and/or pH (representing carbon availability) control and specific growth rate ( $\mu$ ) are shown. p-test results (if available) are shown where same letters indicate no significant difference. ....	76
Table 3.1 Specific growth rates ( $\mu$ ), approximate doubling time ( $t_d$ ), mean final dry weight (mean dw) in $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ and mean final cell density (mean $t_f$ cells) in $\text{cells mL}^{-1}$ . Treatments were BL for blue light grown cultures, GL for green light grown cultures, RL for red light grown cultures and WL for white light grown cultures. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same or no letters indicate no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Values represent mean and standard deviation (SD) (n = 5). ....	141
Table 3.2 Rapid light curve parameters are shown for cultures grown under blue (BL), green (GL), red (RL) and white (WL) light where $F_0$ and $F_m$ is minimum and maximum fluorescence yield of PSII in dark-adapted $a$ is slope of light-limited region, $rETR_{\text{max}}$ is maximum electron transfer rate, $I_k$ is minimum saturating irradiance and $\Phi_{\text{PSII}}$ is maximum quantum yield of photosystem II. Two RLC measurements were taken during each growth cycle at $t_0$ and $t_f$ . One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same or no letters indicates no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Values indicate mean and standard deviation (n = 5). ....	156

Table 4.1 Conditions for the <i>in vitro</i> static digestion model using typical monogastric proteolytic enzymes pepsin and pancreatin. Based on modifications of Moyano & Savoie (2001). .....	208
Table 4.2 Specific growth rates ( $\mu$ ), division rate (td), average dry weight (mean dw) in $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ , average final cell density (mean $t_f$ cells) in $\text{cells mL}^{-1}$ . One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same or no letters indicate no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Data represents the mean and standard deviation ( $n = 7$ ). .....	212
Table 4.3 Rapid light curve data at $t_0$ where, $a$ is photosynthetic rate in light-limited region of RLC, $rETR_{\text{max}}$ is maximum electron transfer rate, $I_k$ is minimum saturating irradiance, $F_0$ is minimum fluorescence of dark-adapted microalgal culture, $F_m$ is maximum fluorescence yield of dark-adapted microalgal culture and $\Phi_{\text{PSII}}$ is maximum quantum yield of photosystem II. One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. Values shown are mean $\pm$ standard deviation ( $n = 7$ ). .....	248
Table 4.4 Rapid light curve data at $t_f$ where, $a$ is photosynthetic rate in light-limited region of RLC, $rETR_{\text{max}}$ is maximum electron transfer rate, $I_k$ is minimum saturating irradiance, $F_0$ is minimum fluorescence of dark-adapted microalgal culture, $F_m$ is maximum fluorescence yield of dark-adapted microalgal culture and $\Phi_{\text{PSII}}$ is maximum quantum yield of photosystem II. Measurements were taken at 3 time points during day three ( $T_f$ ): 0 h ( $T_f 0$ ), 5 h ( $T_f 5$ ) and 8 h after light shift ( $T_f 8$ ). One-way ANOVA performed with Tukey method at 95% confidence: same letter indicate no significant difference and different letters indicate significant difference. One-way ANOVA was used to analyse the same cultures at different time points. Values shown are mean $\pm$ standard deviation ( $n = 7$ ). .....	249

## Abstract of Thesis

In Australia, between 2016 and 2017, aquaculture products made up 44% of Australian seafood product in value, reaching over \$1.35 billion in production value. One of the top five profitable Australian aquaculture products during this period were edible oysters which is worth more than \$112 million in production value.

Oysters are fed with live microalgae (including diatoms) during the larval, juvenile and adult stages of growth, as are other shellfish, some crustaceans, shrimps/prawns and fish. The rearing of oysters and other aquaculture products rely on the constant production of live diatoms as feed. Diatom production in Australian hatcheries are commonly recognised as the major bottleneck in oyster production, estimated to be on average, 30-40% of hatchery operational cost. In order to meet the increasing production demand diatom production must be improved, while making it economically feasible and environmentally sustainable.

In this thesis, *Chaetoceros muelleri*, a common feed for oysters, was studied for their responses to a variety of environmental growth conditions including light. To achieve this, laboratory scale photobioreactors were used to continuously monitor environmental factors to record biological responses of *C. muelleri* to different environmental conditions including light wavelengths. A brief introduction to diatom physiology and its application to aquaculture will be provided in Chapter one. The

second chapter assessed the two key environmental limitations in diatom cultivation in aquaculture facilities, light and CO<sub>2</sub>. An empirical process model was developed to analyse the importance of light configuration to maximise light availability. High CO<sub>2</sub> availability coupled with high light availability significantly increased growth rates and maximum cell density. The third chapter then assessed the growth, metabolic content and cost efficiency of different colour LEDs (blue, green, red and white) based on the findings in Chapter 2. Blue light was found to be the most cost efficient in biomass and metabolite production, requiring less than half the Watt hours of other LEDs. In the fourth chapter, the wavelength of the growth light was shifted to assess its feasibility to modify metabolic content, as well as its effects on growth, photosynthesis and digestibility. The final chapter discussed the key findings of the thesis and the future research prospects. Several important avenues were identified to improve diatom production in aquaculture, such as improving light availability to increase the efficiency of CO<sub>2</sub> usage, blue LEDs to improve cost efficiency of biomass production and the utilization of wavelength shifting to manipulate diatom metabolite content.