

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Tabled 08/03/2022

Legislative Council

2/10/22
Tabled L. Hiscott
22.11.2022

The petitioners draw attention to the House:

We the undersigned are deeply concerned about the proposed expansion of the ocean-based salmon farming industry into the northwest of Tasmania and beyond.

Evidence of serious decline of native fish stocks, degradation of waterways and coastlines, secrecy over operations and public denial of responsibility for major environmental disasters highlight the potential for the salmon industry to be detrimental to the health of the marine and coastal environment of northwest Tasmania.

Impacts on our cultural heritage, our natural and scenic environments, tourism and our commercial and recreational fishing industries and associated employment opportunities will be significant.

Your Petitioners, therefore, call on the government to:

- (1) Institute a moratorium on expansion of ocean-based salmon farming in Tasmania.
- (2) Develop enforceable regulations designed to protect the health of Tasmanian consumers and the marine environment and establish a scientifically capable, properly funded, regulatory body independent of government and industry.
- (3) Develop policy to better integrate ocean and land based aquaculture to minimise negative impact on Tasmania's marine and coastal environment.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

I note that this petition relates to two portfolios and advice has been sought from the Hon Roger Jaensch, Minister for the Environment in providing this response.

The Tasmanian Government is developing a new Salmon Plan which is centred on innovation, continuous improvement and world-leading practices. A plan that will be forward looking, enduring and responsive to the future, and a plan that is developed around the principles of:

- future growth lies in land-based and off-shore salmon farming;
- world's best practice through continuous improvement; and
- strict independent regulation.

The Government's *Draft Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan* (the Draft Plan) has now been released for a period of public consultation and we encourage all stakeholders to continue to provide input and feedback to the development of the Plan, which will take effect by 1 May 2023.

Importantly, the supporting document to the Draft Plan, the *Draft Workplan* includes specific actions that were committed to by the Government in its response to the Legislative Council Committee A finfish inquiry report, along with actions relating to policy for offshore and land based salmon farming.

When Minister Barnett announced the development of Tasmania's 10-Year Salmon Plan in September 2021 he clearly stated an immediate 12 month moratorium was in place. The moratorium meant that, while the 10-Year Salmon Plan was being developed, there would be no net increase in total leasable area for finfish farming in State waters beyond the current allocations and those areas subject to current research permits that may result in approved lease areas. While the moratorium expired at the end of September, this principle will continue to apply until the Plan is finalised and takes effect next year.

Independent regulation of the industry is already in place. In 2016, environmental regulation of the finfish industry was moved to the independent EPA. Since then, there have been significant improvements to the governance and regulatory framework that applies to the salmon industry to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the sector.

On 1 December 2021, Schedule 1 of the *State Service Act 2000* was amended by Order to create the Environment Protection Authority as a standalone state authority, strengthening the independence of the EPA. This means that the EPA is now a separate agency and the staff are no longer part of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. In addition, amendments to the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*, currently before the Parliament, look to clarify the independent role of the EPA.

In addition to pre-existing regulations, specific standards designed to facilitate finfish farming biosecurity management, further bolster environmental regulation, and to ensure state-wide consistency of marine farming management controls across all aquaculture sectors are being progressed, along with standards relating to freshwater finfish farming and the management of wildlife interactions.



Hon Jo Palmer MLC
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Date: 17/11/22