

**RESPONSE TO PETITION
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

TITLE OF PETITION: Salmon Mortality Inquiry

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draw to the attention of the House:

The need for a holistic Inquiry into the causes, response and effects of the mass salmon mortality event that has occurred throughout February and March of 2025 in southeast Tasmania.

Your petitioners call upon the House to initiate an inquiry to:

1. Examine the cause of the mortality event, including the source of the RLO in Okehampton Bay, and its subsequent transmission to different biosecurity areas.
2. Understand how the companies involved contributed to the event through their actions.
3. Examine the response of government agencies and departments.
4. Make recommendations that will improve responses from government agencies and departments.
5. Examine animal welfare, biosecurity, license conditions, controlled waste disposal, public communication response, etc.
6. Examine how the EPA pollution incident response was handled, inter-department and industry communications, which ultimately led to beachgoers not being informed appropriately enough to be able to make informed choices.
7. Examine why large amounts of antibiotic continued to be administered for a further 10 days to an infected pen after mass mortality was evident, and the antibiotic subsequently was not taken up and polluted the surrounding waterway.
8. Examine why the State ministers for the Environment, Health and fisheries were silent on the issue despite public calls for information.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the concerns raised by petitioners regarding the salmon mortality event that occurred in southeast Tasmania during February and March 2025.

Farmed salmon in Tasmania are susceptible to infection by rickettsia-like organisms (RLOs). The Reflections and Learning Report 2025 Salmon Mortality Event published in 2025 concluded the event was “*multifactorial, likely triggered by a summer warming event and compounded by the naturally occurring bacterium *Piscirickettsia salmonis* (*P. salmonis*) and other pathogens.*”.

The *bacterium Piscirickettsia salmonis* (*P. salmonis*) previously classified as the East Coast strain of the Tasmanian RLO, is endemic to Tasmania’s east and southeast coastal waters, and its natural range is dictated by oceanic currents and prevailing conditions. There is no evidence that the event resulted from the introduction of an exotic disease or from a failure of Tasmania’s biosecurity controls.

The Tasmanian salmon industry operates under a comprehensive and highly regulated framework administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas), the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the Department of Health and the Australian Government. Environmental licences require prompt mortality reporting, strict controls on waste handling and disposal, notification and monitoring of antibiotic use, and public reporting of licence-related information. Salmon mortalities are classified as controlled waste and must be managed in accordance with the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Waste Management) Regulations 2020* and EPA-approved Waste Management Plans.

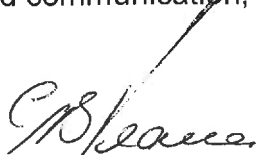
The Government acknowledges community expectations regarding transparency and communication during significant events. In response to the 2025 mortality event, NRE Tasmania and the EPA released the *Reflections and Learnings – 2025 Salmon Mortality Event Report* and a subsequent Progress Report in February 2026. These documents outline reforms to improve inter-agency coordination, regulatory consistency, compliance activity and public communication.

Improvements that have been made since then include aligned mortality reporting requirements across biosecurity and environmental regulators, joint compliance inspections by NRE Tasmania and the EPA, expanded environmental monitoring and reporting, and the establishment of a single, dedicated salmon information platform on the NRE Tasmania website. This platform provides a central source of information and links to relevant EPA and Department of Public Health advice. The Department of Public Health assessed potential public health impacts and advised that *P. salmonis* is a fish pathogen that does not pose a risk to human health or food safety. Public health alerts are issued only where a credible risk to human health has been identified.

The Government recognises the importance of the salmon industry to regional employment, investment and economic activity in Tasmania, alongside strong community expectations for environmental protection, animal welfare and transparency.

The matters raised have been subject to scientific investigation, regulatory oversight, public reporting and continuous improvement processes and are also within the scope of the Government's independent study of the Tasmanian salmon industry. Establishing a Parliamentary inquiry would, in the Government's view duplicate existing work.

The Government remains committed to evidence-based regulation, improved transparency and communication, and the sustainable management of Tasmania's aquaculture industry.



Gavin Pearce MP

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

Date: 16 Apr 2026