

RESPONSE TO PETITION

TITLE OF PETITION:

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draw to the attention of the House that the business of meat processing in Tasmania has become concentrated among a small number of large-scale operations, resulting in:

- More stress and cases of poor treatment of animals, which also leads to lower quality meat;
- Environmental impacts including increased greenhouse gas emissions, higher 'food miles', and less sustainable waste disposal; and
- Impacts on regional communities including loss of local jobs, skills and small farms, as well as reduced 'paddock to plate' tourism and hospitality opportunities.

Your petitioners request the House to call upon the Government to:

1. Introduce legislation to facilitate and encourage best practice on-farm, local and regional slaughter, meat processing and waste disposal.
2. Invest authority for development approvals and operational oversight of relevant facilities in the Chief Meat Inspector; and
3. Fund appropriate training and accreditation for producers and workers throughout the supply chain.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

The Tasmanian Government has been working with industry over the last twelve months to find innovative solutions for on-farm processing that don't compromise food safety, animal welfare or environmental standards.

We want to support our small, local producers to prosper, while protecting our reputation as a safe food supplier and maintaining consumer confidence and market access for Tasmanian meat products.

Improving access to small-scale and mobile meat processing can also help reduce transport stress for animals, lower emissions, and support local jobs and supply chains. These broader benefits are being kept in view as our work progresses.

On-farm and mobile commercial livestock slaughtering and meat processing is able to be undertaken now subject to relevant standards being met, but we are keen to see if there are opportunities to make it easier to do business in this way..

On 7 March 2025, Biosecurity Tasmania convened the first of three meetings with the principal petitioner Matthew Tack, Sprout Tasmania CEO Jennifer Robinson, and other industry representatives. The meetings were also attended by representatives from the following government entities responsible for, or associated with, the regulation of livestock processing (small scale and mobile) in Tasmania:

- Local Government Association of Tasmania
- Consumer Building and Occupational Services
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
- State Planning Office
- Environment Protection Authority
- Waste Recovery Board
- TasTAFE
- TasWater
- Department of Health.

These meetings have been chaired by independent Chair, Felicity Richards, who is also chair of the Tasmanian Livestock Processing Taskforce.

The meetings have identified that a key issue underpinning the petition is the complexity of applying for approval to operate a small-scale or mobile abattoir in Tasmania. Small-scale is interpreted as a facility processing less than 100 tonnes of meat product per year. There are currently 14 small-scale abattoirs operating in Tasmania. There are currently no mobile abattoirs. Importantly, the legislation does not prohibit a mobile abattoir from being established in Tasmania as long as it can show compliance with the relevant standards.

Furthermore, the meetings have scoped the regulatory requirements associated with applying for approval to operate, and subsequently operating, a small-scale or mobile abattoir in Tasmania.

Biosecurity Tasmania is now working collaboratively with other agencies to develop the following:

- A guide for individuals and businesses seeking to establish and operate a small-scale or mobile abattoir in Tasmania. The guide will include an overview of all requirements, a business plan template, and information about how to apply for the necessary approvals.
- A framework for consultation between regulators to minimise duplication in the approvals process; ensure consistent information is provided across agencies; clarify areas of responsibility; and ensure smooth and timely referrals between agencies.
- A list of regulatory challenges, administrative and/or legislative, which may need to be addressed, to be referred to the relevant department and responsible Minister for consideration.

The principal petitioner, Sprout Tasmania and other industry representatives will continue to be consulted as this work is undertaken.

Draft guidelines are expected to be developed by mid-to-late July 2025.

In response to the three specific matters outlined within the petition, the following responses are provided:

1 Introduce legislation to facilitate and encourage best practice on-farm, local and regional slaughter, meat processing and waste disposal.

A review of existing legislation is being undertaken and where legislative changes are identified as necessary to address challenges or encourage best practice, they will be brought to the attention of the relevant Ministers.

2 Invest authority for development approvals and operational oversight of relevant facilities in the Chief Meat Inspector; and

The review of existing legislation will consider if the current approvals process, as legislated, is appropriate. The development of a framework to improve consultation between regulatory agencies will assist in the smooth and timely processing of applications.

3 Fund appropriate training and accreditation for producers and workers throughout the supply chain.

The guidance material being developed will assist producers to better understand their obligations with respect to establishing and operating a small-scale or mobile abattoir. The Certificate III in Meat Safety Inspection, required to be held by at least one person on site at an abattoir, is available from Registered Training Organisations on the mainland. The accessibility of this qualification - including the feasibility of local delivery options - will be considered as part of the regulatory review.



Jane Howlett MP
MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

Date: 26 May 2025