MEDIA RELEASE

27th April 2023

PLAN B: an Alternative Vision for the Tasmanian Salmon Industry

The Tasmanian Government is producing a long-term Salmon Industry Plan due out in May. Drafts of this plan have been so flawed that the Tasmanian Independent Science Council (TISC) has felt compelled to create an alternative. Our plan provides more protection for jobs and the environment and does not pass on responsibility for monitoring and compliance to the industry.

TISC, a body of leading scientists and professionals dedicated to science-based policy reform, has produced PLAN B: an Alternative Vision for Salmon Aquaculture in Tasmania. This ten-point framework focuses on three fundamental principles – world class science and innovation, full transparency, and fair and equitable returns – outlining a more sustainable way forward for the creation of regional jobs and for protecting the environment.

The Tasmanian salmon industry is the largest fish-based industry in Australia, worth over $1 billion. The industry aims to double in the next decade. The three major producers are now entirely foreign-owned and therefore no longer accountable to ASIC – with no requirement for regular public reporting.

Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick, Chair of TISC said, "Expansion of the industry has raced ahead of the science and regulatory frameworks that must underpin it. Increasing pressures from climate change, pollution and pests and a lack of social license also undermine the industry's long-term viability. PLAN B recommends an immediate pause in expansion to let the science and regulation catch up."

Economist Dr Graeme Wells said, "Growth in employment has not kept pace with the rapid expansion in production. With increasing automation and interstate processing the slow employment growth trend is likely to continue. PLAN B offers a more secure employment growth path for the industry."

Leading water quality expert, Christine Coughanowr said, "Tasmania boasts some of the largest salmon cages in the world. A typical farm with about 20 cages produces the equivalent nitrogen pollution as the sewage from the entire Hobart metropolitan area, and there are currently more than 50 farms in the state!"

"Untreated nutrient and faecal pollution released from sea pens is causing algal blooms and oxygen crashes, damaging sensitive habitats, and risking the survival of native species such as the endangered Maugean skate.

"Inland waters are also affected. Across the state, ten flow-through hatcheries release poorly treated wastewater into rivers and lakes, contributing to downstream algal blooms and drinking water problems. This has been a factor in the decision to upgrade Hobart's main drinking water supply at a cost of about $250 million", Coughanowr said.

One example of the missing science in the regulation of this industry is the story of our local bottle-nosed dolphin. Overseas research shows that underwater bombs like those used to deter seals are also harming dolphins, penguins and other marine life. Marine biologist Dr Lisa Gershwin said, "The Tasmanian dolphin likely to be most affected was classified in Tasmania in 2011, and has since been listed as critically endangered in Victoria. Astonishingly, it is still not officially listed as Tasmanian fauna and therefore receives no special protection here.

Kirkpatrick said, "The salmon farming framework outlined by the Government has not been designed with the best interests of Tasmanians at heart. A major rethink of the fundamental principles of how and where salmon are farmed is long overdue. We call on Tasmanians to urge their politicians to implement this vision which creates better prospects for workers and native species, while providing a fairer return for all Tasmanians."

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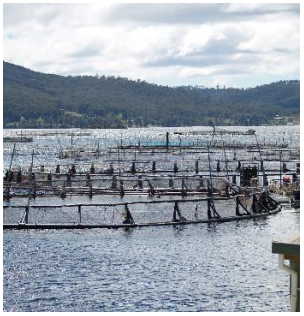
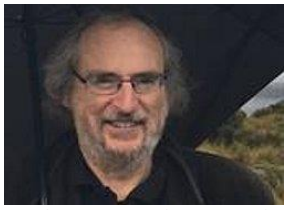
BACKGROUND

Hi res Images and video footage available




Biographies



Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick

Jamie Kirkpatrick AM is Distinguished Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. He teaches in the undergraduate program and supervises many postgraduate and honours students. His main research loves are alpine and garden ecosystems, nature conservation and the politics of environment. He has several national awards and prizes for his work developing methods for planning reserves and his contribution to forest conservation and world heritage matters.

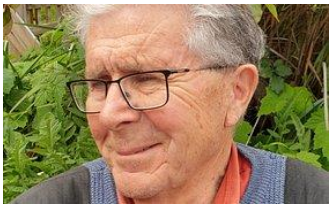
Christine Coughanowr

Christine Coughanowr is an independent scientist with over 35 years' experience in water quality management. She established the award-winning Derwent Estuary Program partnership in 1995, from which she retired from the DEP in 2018 to pursue other interests. These include consulting and provision of science advice to conservation and community groups. She has also worked internationally as a water-resources consultant and is a Churchill Fellow.

Dr Lisa-ann Gershwin

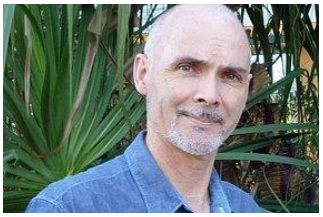
Dr Lisa-ann Gershwin is one of the world's foremost authorities on jellyfish. She has written two best-selling books, published over 70 peer-reviewed scientific papers and industry reports, given two TEDx talks, and discovered more than 200 new species. These days, she has broadened her interests to include the full range of impacts and mitigation in disturbed marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

BACKGROUND



Dr Graeme Wells

Dr Graeme Wells is an independent economist, having previously had an academic career in New Zealand, North America and, more recently, an Associate Professor at ANU and UTAS. Since returning to lutruwita/Tasmania he has been a consultant and adviser to a range of environmental organisations and government agencies.



Dr Edward Butler

Dr Edward Butler is a chemical oceanographer and environmental biogeochemist. His former career of more than 35 years as a government scientist has involved studies of coastal waters around lutruwita/Tasmania and the mainland, and oceans from the Equator to Antarctica. A recent seven-year stint in Darwin provided experience in tropical coastal ecosystems and working with Indigenous communities. Now, unencumbered as an independent researcher, Ed is looking more at the intersection of his knowledge of the environmental health of coastal and marine ecosystems with the development of environmental policy and ecosystem-based management.