

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Phone: +61 3 6165 7670
Email: minister.pearce@dpac.tas.gov.au



Mr Rob Fairs MP
Chair – Estimates Committee B
House of Assembly
Email: Fiona.Murphy@parliament.tas.gov.au

12 JUNE 26

Dear Mr Fairs

Appropriation Bills 2026-27

I refer to my appearance before the House of Assembly Budget Estimates Committee B on 2 June 2026 and provide responses to the questions taken on notice as follows:

Primary Industries and Water

- 1. Please provide the quota numbers of abalone, scallop, rock lobster, scalefish, game and pelagic fish, shellfish; the unit of measure, quota units, fishing licence processing, time target and actual numbers for:**
 - a. 2025-26**
 - b. 2024-25**
 - c. 2023-24**
 - d. 2022-23****by quota units; by species; and by region.**

See attached.

- 2. Will the Minister give a clear commitment that the Government will review the Geelong-Devonport pathway as a matter of urgency and advise industry in writing of the additional measures being taken.**

The spread of Varroa destructor (Varroa mite) on mainland Australia, together with the recently identified presence of miticide resistance in apiaries across several jurisdictions, has been, and continues to be, of concern to the Government.

Biosecurity Tasmania (BT) within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) maintains a general awareness of beekeeper

notified detections of Varroa mite on the mainland through 'heat maps' (where available for a jurisdiction), media monitoring and communications from various Tasmanian and national beekeeper organisations and connections. In relation to recent reports of Varroa mite detection in the Greater Geelong area, I am advised that experience in Australia and internationally indicates the mite can be present in a region for some time prior to formal detection and notification. Tasmania therefore continues to maintain and build upon its proactive, responsive approach to the Varroa mite risk presented by the mainland.

NRE Tas works closely with Tasmania's beekeeping sector and pollination-dependent industry representative bodies through the Varroa Mite Task Force. The Task Force provides a formal consultative mechanism to support delivery of priority actions under Tasmania's Varroa Mite Action Plan 2024-2034 (VMAP). It enables collaborative progression of prevention and preparedness measures between government, industry and beekeepers in the event of a Varroa mite detection in Tasmania. I am advised that the Task Force has recently considered the Geelong–Devonport pathway and agreed that strengthening and broadening the Varroa Mite Communication Plan is a key priority response. BT is currently progressing this work that includes a comprehensive communications plan to ensure timely updates are provided to stakeholders and the wider community.

Additionally, NRE Tas has, in partnership with the Task Force, progressed a number of initiatives through the VMAP including reviewing current Varroa mite surveillance activities (Action 2.2), developing a response strategy for Varroa mite (Action 3.2), and undertaking stakeholder engagement (Action 4.2). I am advised that a status report of the VMAP will be published on NRE Tas's website shortly.

BT has also worked with airlines to update incoming biosecurity advice to include specific reference to bee products. In addition, targeted training and communications activities are being implemented in relation to the Geelong–Devonport pathway to enhance Varroa mite awareness. The Geelong–Devonport route has been an ongoing pathway of concern for a range of pests and diseases, including Varroa mite, and I am advised that BT maintains ongoing biosecurity activities to manage these risks. These include container inspections, surveillance programs, engagement with port authorities and collaboration with TT-Line.

The risk of all possible carrier and entry pathways of Varroa mite into Tasmania has been assessed through the recent Import Risk Analysis undertaken by BT, irrespective of geographic origin. This work will inform ongoing import controls for potential Varroa mite carriers. Tasmania currently operates under a General Biosecurity Direction made under the *Biosecurity Act 2019*, which prohibits the importation of European honey bees and apiary products assessed as posing a Varroa mite risk. This Direction has been in place since the initial response in New South Wales and applies across the Australian mainland.

BT also maintains dedicated surveillance systems for early detection of Varroa mite and other priority bee pests at all four key ports, including Devonport, using sentinel and guard hives, catch boxes and floral sweeping. These programs are continually reviewed to ensure they remain robust in light of evolving conditions on the mainland. The Government also acknowledges the critical role of Tasmania's

approximately 1,500 beekeepers managing close to 40,000 hives in undertaking mandatory hive inspections to support early detection, reporting and rapid response capability.

3. What is the status of outstanding (11) recommendations of the Independent Review of Tasmania's Water Accountability Framework?

An independent review of Tasmania's Water Accountability Framework found that the current framework has served the State well but requires modernising to meet current and emerging challenges.

The Tasmanian Government supports all 23 recommendations in the independent report which span policy, legislative, administrative and operational changes. Twelve of these key recommendations are already underway through the Water Accountability Project and/or implementation of complementary projects delivered under the Rural Water Use Strategy.

A risk-based approach to implementing the recommendations from the review will be adopted meaning different water accountability measures will be required in different catchments based on risk. Opportunities for engagement with water managers and water users will be a key focus during implementation.

This work includes development of a Catchment Water Accountability Prioritisation Framework, which is a tool to evaluate the potential for catchments to experience water stress, based on conditions such as where water demand is high compared to supply, or where water is linked to important drinking water, environmental or recreational values. The Prioritisation Framework is currently being verified, supported by survey work, field work and development of case-study examples, expected to commence later this year.

Through this approach the remaining recommendations will be addressed.

Opportunities for engagement with water managers and water users will be a key focus during implementation of the remainder of the recommendations, which will be staged over a number of years to allow people to have their say and have time to adapt. This staging will enable the remaining recommendations to be effectively sequenced in with the delivery of other water policy and operational tasks as well as to enable effective integration with outputs from the Water Information Management System Replacement project.

Further information is available at <https://nre.tas.gov.au/water/rural-water-use-strategy/activities-underway/water-accountability-project>

Veterans' Affairs

- 1. How much funding was provided to the Tasmanian Government from the Federal Government to support veteran employment services through the outcome of the Royal Commission into Veterans deaths and suicides? When was this funding provided?**

The Australian Government has not provided any funding to the Tasmanian Government to support veterans' employment services through the outcome of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G Pearce'.

Hon Gavin Pearce MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Attachment - Fisheries information

Abalone

Licence year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
No. quota units	3500	3500	3500	3500	3500
Weight per quota unit (kg)	227	221	216	218	209
<i>Parts of the fishery</i>	<i>Weight per part</i>				
East	64	65	66	65	58
North	17	17	18	19	16
Bass Strait	23	24	23	23	25
West	97	89	84	85	82
Greenlip	26	26	25	26	28

Rock lobster

Licence year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
No. quota units	10506	10506	10506	10506
Weight per quota unit (kg)	100	100	100	100

Giant crab

Licence year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
No. quota units	1035	1035	1035	1035
Weight per quota unit (kg)	20	20	20	20

Scallop

Licence year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
No. quota units	10310	10310	10310	10310
Weight per quota unit (kg)	436*	484	388	294

* increased from 339kg/unit on 5 Sept 2022

Banded morwong

Licence year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
No. quota units	1192	1192	1192	1192
Weight per quota unit (kg)	30	30	28	28

Other fisheries (e.g. scalefish, game and pelagic, shellfish) are not subject to individual quotas.

Fishers' licensing transaction times (processing of routine applications)

This measure reflects the response time for processing of routine applications.

		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
	Unit of measure	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual*	Target
Fishers' licensing transaction times	Per cent completed in three working days	≥95	95	≥95	95	≥95	95	≥95	95

*To 4 June 2026

Marine Resources processes a large number of different types of transactions, not all of which are routine. A number of factors can make an application non-routine. Additionally the time at which the application is submitted is considered to be the point at which all required information is provided and payment is made. Reporting indicates that at least 95% of routine licence applications are made within 3 days. In most circumstances licence renewals and seasonal quota allocations and transfers are routine.