

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH
HON GUY BARNETT MP
Living Marine Resources Management Act (Aquaculture Research) Bill 2021

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Mr Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

I present to the House the *Living Marine Resources Amendment (Aquaculture Research) Bill 2021*.

The purpose of the draft Bill is to enable marine aquaculture research to be conducted in Commonwealth waters adjacent to the State of Tasmania pursuant to an arrangement with the Commonwealth under the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995*.

Mr Speaker, the Bill advances a long-held aspiration for state and territory jurisdictions to regulate and manage aquaculture in adjacent Commonwealth waters. Moreover, the Government is seeking to maximise the potential opportunity for Tasmania from aquaculture in offshore Commonwealth waters for all potential species for example, fin fish, seaweed, and other potential species, whilst realising value for Tasmanians.

The National Aquaculture Strategy, which is endorsed by Tasmania, aims to grow the value of Australia's aquaculture industry. A priority identified in the Strategy is efficient regulatory frameworks modelled on established best practice that support sustainable aquaculture industry growth.

The Strategy recognises that:

"In the past, aquaculture has operated in waters managed by state and Northern Territory governments. However, environmental and resource access benefits and improvements in technology are making aquaculture in Commonwealth waters feasible. The Australian Government believes this should be encouraged in the most efficient manner possible, which in most cases means enabling state and Northern Territory governments to extend their existing aquaculture legislation and management into Commonwealth waters adjacent to their jurisdictions. This will ensure operators are covered by consistent regulations in adjacent waters and may reduce unnecessary compliance and planning costs."

Enabling offshore aquaculture in adjoining Commonwealth waters will require a robust legal framework to be developed by the State in cooperation with the Australian Government and consistent with national policy and approaches.

The sensible first step is to support the potential for marine aquaculture research. For example, the onset of the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre (Blue Economy CRC) centred in Launceston, provides an immediate and significant opportunity for a strategic research partner to look at aquaculture farming potential and technologies adjacent to Tasmania.

This Bill will enable marine aquaculture research activities which can also help inform the development of the future arrangements required for offshore aquaculture in Commonwealth waters. It seeks to put Tasmania on the first step towards realising the full potential of offshore aquaculture.

Over time, we intend to develop the potential legislative and regulatory framework and administrative processes needed to provide for commercial-scale marine aquaculture industries to operate in Commonwealth waters.

Blue Economy CRC's website describes the socio-economic potential well:

"With the third largest Exclusive Economic Zone globally (a marine territory larger than its landmass) Australia has enormous potential to use its ocean domain to increase seafood and renewable energy production. Aquaculture is the fastest growing global food-producing sector, with the highest per capita consumers of seafood located in Asia. Increasing demand from Asia will only be met from aquaculture, yet existing and emerging aquaculture industries in Australia and other parts of the world are constrained by the availability of suitable near shore production sites. Offshore aquaculture is a solution to meet this opportunity."

This Bill specifically enables the State to enter into an arrangement with the Commonwealth for marine aquaculture research to be managed according to the law of Tasmania in waters on the seaward side of the coastal waters of the State.

The Bill ensures that aquaculture research can be permitted when such an arrangement with the Commonwealth is in place.

In deciding whether to grant a research permit for any offshore aquaculture activity, the Minister will be required to consult with the Director of the Environment Protection Authority. The Minister will also be required to incorporate any conditions specifically for fin fish farming that the Director considers necessary.

The Bill will also ensure that research in Commonwealth waters is managed appropriately and consistently with State animal welfare laws for animal research activities; which in the context of research activities could, by way of example, include permit conditions relating to animal ethics approval.

These amendments do not exist in isolation from other State laws. For example, the *Biosecurity Act 2019* which has express extraterritorial operation, applies to all dealings with fish and fishing equipment in Tasmania's adjacent waters. This means that, for example, the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) can be consulted on research proposals, and to be clear, the Government intention is that the CVO will be consulted. The proposed Salmonid Biosecurity Program currently under development, which would be regulated under the *Biosecurity Act 2019*, would also apply to activities being conducted by research institutions for scientific purposes in Tasmania's adjacent area.

Mr Speaker, the approach just outlined is deliberately designed to reflect the well-established robust regulatory framework that applies to marine farming in state waters and is appropriate in the context and scale of enabling scientific aquaculture research activities. I again note that the intent is to develop a holistic framework that enables aquaculture research for all potential species for example, fin fish, seaweed, and other potential species.

In closing, I am pleased to advise that consultation on the draft Bill has included the Blue Economy CRC, the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council, the Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association, the Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARFish), Marine and Safety Tasmania, as well as the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment. The draft Bill was released for public comment and seven submissions were received. Those submissions and a report on the consultation has been published on the Department's website.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.