

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON GUY BARNETT MP

Inland Fisheries Amendment (Royalties) Bill 2019

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

I am pleased to bring this Bill to the House as the Hodgman Government continues to improve the legislative framework by addressing unforeseen historical issues as they arise.

This Bill provides for an amendment to the *Inland Fisheries Act 1995* to correct an historical administrative oversight, dating back to at least 1996. During the re-make of the Inland Fisheries regulations, as required upon their ten-year anniversary, it became apparent that certain commercial fee provisions were not supported by the 'head of power' sections of the *Inland Fisheries Act 1995*.

Tasmania's commercial freshwater fisheries include the wild harvest eel fishery, freshwater hatcheries for the salmon industry, fish dealers and registered private fisheries. Collectively, commercial freshwater fisheries are a significant contributor to the Tasmanian economy and it is therefore imperative they are regulated and managed to ensure their viability. The Inland Fisheries Service undertakes this important role on behalf of the Government.

The Inland Fisheries Service ensures the sustainability of commercial freshwater resources, the protection of biodiversity and the natural environment, equity across the sector and access to premium export markets. This important service is largely funded by industry on a cost recovery basis with the Inland Fisheries Service investing all revenue from licence fees and charges back into commercial fisheries support, compliance and administration.

The Tasmanian Freshwater Eel Fishery is a small commercial fishery based mainly on short-finned eels. The total held catch for 2018-19 was 32 595 kilograms with an estimated market value of \$450 000. Tasmanian eels are marketed domestically and internationally. The Inland Fisheries Service ensures compliance with sustainability measures for the wild harvest eel fishery as required through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This supports the inclusion of Tasmanian freshwater eels on the List of Exempt Native Specimens that permits their export from Australia to international markets.

The fishery is managed by 12 geographically defined commercial fishing licenses that are transferrable and provide exclusive commercial rights within the defined area. Each licence, issued under the *Inland Fisheries Act 1995*, includes a suite of conditions that reflect sustainability and management measures appropriate to the waters included in the licence.

The Inland Fisheries Service administers these measures, provides fishery compliance and supports each licence holder with an allocation of juvenile eels each season to allow for stock supplementation. Through good management, the fishery has remained viable since 1965. The

wild harvest fishery is at capacity however there is potential for increased production through aquaculture.

To support management and regulation, each licence holder pays an annual licence fee as well as a fee for each kilogram of eel taken from this State fishery.

Freshwater hatcheries are the foundation of the expanding salmon industry and a vital component of the Government's *Sustainable industry growth plan for the salmon industry*. The *Inland Fisheries Act 1995* regulates the operation and biosecurity of freshwater hatcheries by licence.

In recent years, there have been major changes to the operation and scale of freshwater fish farms because of expansion in the salmon industry. This includes technological change from flow-through to recirculating water-based hatcheries, significant increases in standing bio-mass and an increased focus on biosecurity measures.

It is critically important that this expansion of the industry is well regulated and managed to protect freshwater resources and ecosystems. The Inland Fisheries Service works to ensure sustainable industry practices, the promotion and enhancement of biosecurity and the application of on-going contemporary management systems including compliance and audit.

Historically fish farm fees included a component that reflected water usage. This was based on flow through technology, with larger water users paying higher fees, reflecting their higher production. With the change in the salmon industry to recirculating technology, water use is no longer an accurate measure of the size or complexity of a fish farm. The Government is considering alternative approaches in the re-making of the Inland Fisheries regulations this year.

The *Inland Fisheries Act 1995* allows for fees relating to provision of services, but not fees relating to kilograms of wild eels caught commercially (royalties) or water used by fish farms. It was an historical administrative oversight that commercial fees for the eel fishery and freshwater hatcheries were incorrectly levied for an extended period of time.

The Bill rectifies this situation by amending the *Inland Fisheries Act 1995* with both validating and enabling provisions to endorse commercial fees and royalties received in the past and to allow the Director of Inland Fisheries to collect royalties from the wild harvest eel fishery into the future.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.