

SUMMARY: TASMANIAN OCEAN SUMMIT 2023 CALLS FOR URGENT GOVERNMENT ACTION

The second [Tasmanian Ocean Summit](#), hosted by the Australia Institute on Friday, 17 November 2023, was held at Spring Bay Mill, Triabunna. The Summit brought together a diverse array of marine community members to address Tasmania's dual crises of conflict over marine resources and climate change impacts. The Summit considered how to better protect biodiversity in a changing ocean, emerging and competing uses for space in our coastal waters, and moving Tasmania towards Australia's new national vision and commitment to ocean sustainability.

Participants included representatives from Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, the Australian Government, commercial and recreational marine sectors, researchers, academics, economists, management and legal experts and community members. A key outcome from the Summit was the nearly unanimous [call for urgent government action](#):

Participants at the Tasmanian Ocean Summit 2023 call on the Tasmanian Government to urgently implement wholistic, integrated management in Tasmania's coastal waters/Sea Country, that:

- *includes comprehensive stakeholder consultation;*
- *is informed by (assessment of) a diverse range of values;*
- *recognises/acknowledges the sovereign rights of Tasmanian Aboriginal People; and*
- *has a transparent evidence base.*

Discussing big blue issues

The Summit began with three keynote presentations:

- Andry Sculthorpe, Land and Heritage Unit, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, spoke about Sea Country rights and interests for Aboriginal people,
- Belinda Jago, Branch Head, Oceans and Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment, and Water, provided an overview of the Development of Australia's Sustainable Ocean Plan; and
- Polly Hemming, Climate and Energy Program Director, The Australia Institute, spoke about Blue carbon, net zero or nature positive? Climate policy beyond the buzzwords.

Other presentations and panel discussions addressed topics including:

- the Australia Institute's discussion paper [It's TIME: A proposal for a Tasmanian Integrated Marine Estate Act](#) which recommends establishing an independent authority responsible for a state-wide Marine Estate Management Strategy and a Marine Spatial Planning Framework
- impacts of climate change on the marine environment and marine heatwaves
- State and federal obligations to protect the endangered Maugean skate
- Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples' connection and rights to Sea Country were a cross cutting theme throughout the day

- the case for integrated ocean management and a robust, adaptive spatial planning system for Tasmania's coastal waters to adequately protect natural values
- the key role of commercial fishers in responsible marine resource management
- the proposed renewable energy zone in Bass Strait
- shifting the way we think about the ocean as a resource and recognising its essential role in human and planetary wellbeing
- marine protected areas roles as scientific reference areas, building resilience to climate change, protecting biodiversity, and potential impacts on cultural connections
- fostering community affinity with the broader Great Southern Reef
- integrity concerns in biodiversity and carbon offsetting, including blue carbon credits
- sustainable recreational fisheries management in Tasmania
- the real economic contribution of the Tasmanian salmon industry
- the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre's work on offshore seaweed, finfish and shellfish aquaculture, and decarbonising ocean industries
- marine tenures, rights and mechanisms to achieve adaptive spatial planning.

Identifying shared objectives for the ocean we want

Summit participants were invited to complete a survey *Identifying and prioritising shared objectives for the ocean we want*. The survey asked participants to identify their strongest connection to the ocean and rank 13 objectives in order of priority. The aim of the exercise was to gain an understanding of priorities for the marine environment, in the context of the ongoing inaugural review of Tasmania's main marine law, the *Living Marine Resource Management Act 1995*. Objectives were drawn from existing integrated management legislation in NSW and Victoria (see [It's TIME: A proposal for a Tasmanian Integrated Marine Estate Act](#) for further information).

Most participants identified their strongest connection to the ocean as recreational (58%), followed by research (19%), culture (8%) and commercial fishing (7%). Food, tourism and renewable energy ranked lowest. Participants identified protecting and enhancing the marine environment as the highest priority objective. This was followed by recognising Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples' rights, promoting resilience to climate change, integrated management, building scientific understanding, engagement and participation in management, and education, followed by sustainable use, increasing marine protected areas and others.

Outcomes

The review of Tasmania's main marine law provides a once in a generation opportunity to significantly improve the way we care for and use Tasmania's coastal waters. The Australia Institute encourages Summit participants to engage directly in government consultations on the review in 2024. We have shared your call for urgent government action with the Premier and relevant Ministers. Information from the day is available on the [Summit webpage](#), including two fantastic videos of our presenters talking about the most important thing to know about our oceans and one thing they would change to change to save our oceans.