

# DEAR ENVIRONMENT MINISTER TANYA PLIBERSEK

## WE, THE UNDERSIGNED SCIENTISTS, ASK YOU TO HONOUR YOUR PLEDGE OF 'NO NEW EXTINCTIONS'

We, the undersigned scientists, ask you to honour your pledge of 'no new extinctions' by taking urgent action to prevent the extinction of the Maugean Skate, found only in Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania.

This is not simply a local issue. If extinction eventuates, it will be of global significance. This species, a Gondwanan relict from the oldest lineage of skate on the planet, is a world heritage value.

The science undertaken by the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, has identified the species has declined by 47% since 2012. Your Department's Threatened Species Scientific Committee has, on the basis of the best available information, assessed the impact of salmonid aquaculture as 'catastrophic' to the skate.

The extinction of the skate would be contrary to globally accepted norms for sustainable development and be inconsistent with Australia's numerous international commitments to apply a precautionary approach to environmental management. Australia has relevant international commitments under the:

- World Heritage Convention: Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area includes one third of Macquarie Harbour;
- International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, which includes skates and rays; and
- High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which includes to sustainably manage 100% of all Australian waters.

The implications of the extinction of the skate for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area will be far reaching and extremely damaging for Australia's standing in the global community.

You have the responsibility for Australia's commitments to protect the skate and the capacity to immediately halt salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour. Difficult decisions are required, and the impact on the west coast community will require support from governments, and from the industry that has profited from salmon farming in Tasmanian waters to date.

Combined, we have many years of scientific investigation and leadership in Australia and overseas. Our research, teaching and management experience make us conclude that a nation with strong aspirations for a sustainable blue economy cannot support industries that are primary contributors to the extinction of a species.

We call on you to revoke the 2012 decision that allowed expanded fish-farming and, instead, recognise the science that concludes that unacceptable impacts are occurring in Macquarie Harbour. This revocation and steps to reposition the Macquarie Harbour community are urgently required if the current path to extinction is to be avoided.

**The Maugean Skate is a prime example of the need to defend Australia's unique ecosystems and species, which we have been fortunate to inherit from past generations, so that we can pass them onto future generations.**

**Failing to do so when there are clear paths for action would be unethical and indefensible.**

### YOURS SINCERELY

**Stewart Frusher** retired Professor, Marine Science, University of Tasmania, former director, Centre for Marine Socioecology

**Andrew Wright** former Executive Secretary, Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, and former Executive Director, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

**Joe Adelstein** marine engineer, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and formerly of University of Tasmania

**Dr Ian Allison** Scientist

**Professor Stephen Battaglione** former Associate, Aquaculture Program Leader University of Tasmania

**Honorary Professor Johann Bell** Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security, University of Wollongong

**Dr Larelle Bossi** Institute for Ethics, Governance and Law, Griffith University

**Professor Culum Brown** School of Natural Sciences, Macquarie University

**Professor Maria Byrne** FAA Marine Studies Institute, University of Sydney

**Dr Rob Campbell** retired Principal Fisheries Scientist and former Convenor, Management Issues, Scientific Committee for the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

**Adjunct Professor Andrew Constable** Centre for Marine Socioecology, University of Tasmania

**Louise Cherrie** Environmental Consultant and former Tasmanian EPA Board and Marine Farming Review Panel member

**Emeritus Professor John Church** FAA Climate Change Research Centre, University of New South Wales

**Professor Don Driscoll** Deakin University Dr Jamie Graham-Blair, Pakana Biocultural Conservationist and Marine Ecologist

**Dr Peter Kyne** Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Charles Darwin University, marine conservation biologist, and lead author of the Action Plan for Australian Sharks and Rays 2021

**Dr Peter Last** retired State and Commonwealth Research Scientist

**Adjunct Professor Jeffrey M Leis** Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, retired Senior Principal Research Scientist, Australian Museum Research Institute, and former member of the NSW Fisheries Scientific Committee

**Dr Phei Lok** Non-executive Director, Sharks and Rays Australia Research Ltd

**Dr Naima Andrea López** Research Fellow, University of Western Australia

**Emeritus Professor Helene Marsh** AO FAA FTSE FRZS FQA Environmental Science, James Cook University

**Dr Jonathon Mitchell** Research Fellow, School of Biological Sciences, University of Western Australia

**Emeritus Professor Barbara Nowak** FAA Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania

**Professor John M. Pandolfi** School of Environment, University of Queensland

**Professor Hugh Possingham** FAA FNAS University of Queensland

**Dr Vincent Raoult** Senior Lecturer, Griffith University

**Professor Euan Ritchie** Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, Deakin University

**Dr Tony Smith** AM

**Dr Kilian Stehfest** Quantitative Marine Scientist, formerly of University of Tasmania

**The Tasmanian Independent Science Council**

**Professor Adriana Verges** University of New South Wales

**Dr Nerida Wilson** University of Western Australia

**Dr Tony Worby** Founder/Principal, Second Breath and former Director of Oceans and Atmosphere, CSIRO

**Barbara E. Wueringer** Sharks and Rays Australia Research Ltd

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