From:	Tanya Patrick
To:	Tasmanian Salmon Study Secretariat
Subject:	Feedback on the Draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
Date:	Sunday, 5 July 2026 11:54:06 PM
Attachments:	Feedback on engagement plan_Tanya Patrick.pdf

Please find attached my feedback on the Draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Kind regards,

Tanya Patrick

Feedback on the Stakeholder Engagement Plan
Independent Study of the Tasmanian Salmon Industry

Prepared by: Tanya Patrick
Submitted in an individual capacity
5 July 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the Independent Study of the Tasmanian Salmon Industry.

My professional background is in education, engagement and public communication. I currently work across education, engagement and communication functions in a federal government agency. Prior to this I've work as a science communication consultant and for seven years was managing editor of CSIRO's children's science publication, where I worked to make complex scientific concepts clear, engaging and accessible.

I support the intent of the plan, particularly its stated commitment to independence, transparency, evidence, inclusivity and safety. These principles are essential given the level of public interest, community concern and economic dependence connected to salmon farming in Tasmania.

However, my primary concern is that the plan still reads more like a process document than a genuinely community-centred engagement plan.

The Draft Study Plan asks Tasmanians to place confidence in an independent process on an issue that is environmentally, culturally, economically and socially significant. The engagement approach should meet that responsibility.

For a study of this level of public interest, this matters. Trust will depend not only on whether engagement occurs, but on whether people can see the path through the process.

Community knowledge must count

People will come to this study with different levels of knowledge, confidence, literacy, time and trust in government processes. Some will have technical expertise. Others will have long-term local knowledge of waterways, wildlife, fishing, boating, amenity, community wellbeing and change over time. A strong engagement plan needs to support both.

The engagement principles state that "stakeholder input is treated as evidence to be tested against scientific data, international benchmarks, the existing regulatory framework and previous inquiries." The plan also states that "all material relied on for findings or recommendations will be based on verifiable evidence and sources."

The plan's commitment to inclusivity and safety is important, particularly in a contested issue where some people may feel uncomfortable about speaking publicly. However, the wording needs to be corrected so it does not appear to welcome community input, then almost immediately discount the knowledge of people who do not have scientific, technical or institutional backgrounds.

I understand the need for care and rigour. However, community observation is often where important evidence begins. In many areas of public health and environmental protection, lived observation has come first and formal evidence has followed.

People notice patterns: changes in water, illness in a workplace, harm to wildlife, changes in local ecosystems. Those observations may not be proof on their own, but they are often the first sign that something needs proper investigation.

This knowledge should not be treated as secondary simply because it comes from community members rather than institutions or experts.

The plan (and study) should make clear that community knowledge will be welcomed, considered seriously, and used to help identify issues, test assumptions and highlight gaps in the evidence.

Suggested wording

Anonymous input will be available for people who are concerned about speaking publicly.

The study will consider a broad range of evidence, including scientific data, expert advice, cultural knowledge, local knowledge, lived experience and community observation.

Findings and recommendations will explain how different types of evidence have been considered, and where gaps remain.

Making participation easier

The plan would benefit from simpler, more practical public-facing information.

If the engagement process is to be genuinely inclusive, it needs to recognise that people access and understand information in different ways. Literacy levels, confidence with government processes, internet access and preferred communication channels all vary across the community.

The study should not rely mainly on a long PDF, website updates and formal submissions. It needs a clear multi-channel approach, with printed information for older people, regional communities and people with limited online access, as well as social media content, short videos or explainers for younger audiences and people more likely to engage through digital channels.

For example, the study could provide:

- a one-page “have your say” guide
- short summaries and fact sheets for each study topic
- examples of the kinds of community knowledge, observations and evidence people can provide
- optional prompts to help people describe what they have noticed over time.

For example, people could be invited to reflect on:

- What changes have you noticed over time?
- Where have you noticed these changes?
- When did you first start noticing them?
- Have the changes been gradual, sudden, seasonal or ongoing?
- What was the area like before?
- What is different now?
- How have these changes affected your use, enjoyment or understanding of the area?
- Do you have photographs, records, diaries, correspondence or other material that helps tell the story of what you have observed?

These prompts should be voluntary, not restrictive. People should still be able to provide open comments in their own words. The aim is not to turn community input into a tick-box exercise, but to give people enough structure to participate confidently and help the study identify patterns across community observations.

Fact sheets before engagement

The plan says evidence, data and information will be published progressively through fact sheets and “what we have heard” updates. This is a strength.

I suggest fact sheets also be published before each phase of engagement, so people have the context they need before they are asked to comment.

These fact sheets should be short, plain language and independently endorsed. They could explain:

- what the topic is
- why it matters
- what is known
- what is uncertain or contested
- what kind of community input would help.

Their role would not be to argue a position. It would be to give everyone a shared starting point.

I have included an example below of the kind of plain English, place-based fact sheet that could accompany each study phase. I have looked at two regions — Macquarie Harbour and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Huon River and Port Esperance — because they are arguably the most contested salmon farming areas in Tasmania at present.

The example is not intended to be final or complete. It shows the kind of context people may need before they are asked to provide feedback.

Fact sheet 1: Where salmon farming occurs in Tasmania

Purpose

Salmon farming occurs in coastal and estuarine waters around Tasmania.

Where salmon farms are located matters.

Location affects water movement, waste build-up, oxygen levels, wildlife, cultural values, nearby communities and other marine uses.

Location shapes:

• what effects may occur
• how serious those effects may be
• who or what may be affected.

Locations

This section could be shown as an infographic over a map of Tasmania.

Macquarie Harbour (west coast- 10 marine farming leases)

Why is this under scrutiny?

Macquarie Harbour does not flush like the open sea. Water moves in and out slowly, so waste and nutrients can stay in the system longer.

This matters because salmon farming adds organic waste to a harbour that already has limited capacity to recover. When waste breaks down, it can affect oxygen levels in the water and on the seabed. Low oxygen can place pressure on marine life, including species that live close to the bottom.

This matters for oxygen levels, the seabed and the species that call the harbour home, including the ancient Maugean skate.

Key question

Can Macquarie Harbour stay healthy, and can the life that depends on it survive, with this level of fish farming?

D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Huon River and Port Esperance (southern Tasmania - 25 farming leases)

Why is this under scrutiny?

This region is not open ocean. It is a network of connected coastal and estuarine waters, including channels, bays, river-influenced areas and nearshore habitats.

It has the highest number of marine farming leases in Tasmania. That means the concern is not only about one lease or one impact.

Concerns include water quality, algal blooms, seabed health, noise, odour, amenity, fish deaths, disease, antibiotic use, wild fisheries and impacts on other marine users.

In summer, these waters warm. Climate change is increasing marine heat stress over time. Atlantic salmon are cold-water fish, so warmer water can increase stress, disease risk and fish deaths. When bacterial disease occurs, antibiotics are currently used by the industry to manage infection in farmed salmon.

The region also supports abalone and rock lobster fisheries, nearshore habitats, recreational fishing, boating, tourism, coastal living and Aboriginal sea country. Nutrient loads, farm operations and antibiotic use can affect not only the environment, but also public confidence in shared waters and other Tasmanian seafood industries.

Key question
Can these connected coastal waters carry this level of fish farming without harming water quality, ecosystems, communities and other fisheries?

First Nations engagement

The plan says Tasmanian Aboriginal groups will be engaged "to incorporate indigenous knowledge and address impacts on sea country and cultural heritage." This is an important commitment, but the plan does not explain how this will happen in practice.

It also frames Aboriginal people as stakeholders. That term may be appropriate for some groups, but it is too limited here. Aboriginal people are not just another interest group in this process. They are rights holders, knowledge holders and custodians of country.

For this engagement to be safe and meaningful, the plan needs to map how it will happen in practice — who will guide it, how cultural knowledge will be protected, and how Aboriginal perspectives will shape the study.

This matters because Aboriginal people have strong and justified reasons to mistrust government processes. A general commitment to consultation is not enough. The plan should be clear about how the study will avoid extractive engagement, where Aboriginal

knowledge is sought but the process, questions and outcomes remain controlled by government or external experts.

The plan should explain:

- who will guide First Nations engagement
- whether Aboriginal people or organisations helped design the engagement approach
- how engagement will be place-based and connected to sea country
- how cultural knowledge will be protected, including what can and cannot be made public
- how people will be supported to participate safely, including time, format, location and resourcing
- how Aboriginal perspectives will shape the study questions, not just respond to them
- how the study will report back to Aboriginal communities about what was heard and how it was considered.

Final observation: good engagement strengthens the study

Overall, the plan sets out a useful structure. Its principles are sound, and its commitment to independence, transparency and evidence is important.

The opportunity now is to make the engagement process as strong as the study's ambition.

This means giving people clear markers through the process, recognising different forms of knowledge, supporting participation before views are sought, and closing the loop on what has been heard.

Done well, engagement does not sit beside the evidence base. It will strengthen it. It will help the study identify issues, test assumptions, understand trade-offs and build public confidence in the final advice provided to government.