

MPs back EPA inquiry call

Duncan Abey

Anti-salmon farming group wants independent review

Independent members of Tasmania's parliament have joined Greens and Jacqui Lambie Network representatives to back an anti-salmon farming group's call for an independent review of the state's Environmental Protection Authority.

Neighbours of Fish Farming president, Peter George, claimed the EPA was no longer fit for purpose, citing a situation in Macquarie Harbour where he claimed salmon industry operations were inflicting ongoing damage to the marine environment.

Mr George said NOFF hoped the new parliament, where a minority Liberal government will require the ongoing support of the three new JLN members, and independents Kristie Johnston and David O'Byrne, offered the chance to investigate the EPA's effectiveness.

"Independents and cross-bench parties are demonstrating that they will collaborate and to exert their authority as a genuine and effective opposition in the new parliament," Mr George said.

"NOFF is aware of deep concerns about the EPA's failures across the state.

"With the much-delayed State of the Environment report due soon and with salmon industry plans to expand into north west waters of the state and further north into Storm Bay, we are going to need a better, stronger, more open and more independent EPA than exists now."

Ms Johnston claimed the EPA was "missing in action" on properly protecting Macquarie Harbour, saying Tasmanians

expected the highest standards from the state's regulatory bodies.

The independent member for Clark said constituents had raised concerns that the agency was not performing its core function of environmental steward.

"It's a shame that both the Liberals and opposition are at one on this issue," she said. "But the community has no confidence in an authority that allows a tragedy to occur in Macquarie Harbour, for instance. The Environmen-

tal Protection Authority should be acting in the interests of Tasmanian communities and the environment, and not those of big corporations."

Independent MLC, Meg Webb, said she was backing the call for a "root-and-branch" inquiry into EPA to ensure the body was delivering on its statutory roles and meeting community expectations in protecting Tasmania's natural environment.

"An independent inquiry is needed as Tasmanians have a right to know whether the EPA

is living up to its name and providing robust, independent protection to our state's natural environment," the member for Nelson said.

Minister for Parks and Environment, Nick Duigan, said the government was committed to ensuring the operations of the EPA were effective in serving the Tasmania community, and had established the Authority as an independent body in 2022.

Both the EPA, and Salmon Tasmania, were contacted for comment.