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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House, Canberra

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INQUIRY SUBMISSION THE THREAT OF MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION IN AUSTRALIA

I have pleasure in enclosing a submission to the above Inquiry, on behalf of the Tasmanian Government.

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GENERAL MANAGER, EPA DIVISION

Submission from the Tasmanian Government Senate Inquiry into the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia

Tasmania has both macro and micro items of marine plastic pollution impacting on species and ecological communities. It is recognised that the sources for both originate from land and water based activities.

The following list provides a summary of activities being undertaken in Tasmania to help understand the sources and mitigate the threat of marine plastic pollution.

Legislation/Regulations/Management controls

- The *Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2013* prohibits retailers in Tasmania from supplying lightweight plastic shopping bags to shoppers (<35 microns in thickness).
- The *Litter Act 2007* prohibits the deposit of litter in the environment, regulates the distribution of material that may become litter, and protects and enhances natural and urban environments.
- The Litter Act provides a legal basis for the litter hotline, where, if an individual sees littering from a motor vehicle or marine vessel, they can report by phone or online to the Environment Protection Authority. <http://epa.tas.gov.au/regulation/report-littering>
- The *Litter (Infringement Offences) Regulations 2011* specify on-the-spot fines for offences under the Litter Act.
- Management controls contained in Marine Farm Development Plans require the lessee to take action as soon as reasonably possible to remove debris and tidy up an area affected by marine farming debris and to maintain marine farming equipment and structures in a serviceable order and to remove any considered to be in a state of disrepair.

Community participation/awareness

- Members of the community can report littering if it has occurred from either a motor vehicle or marine vessel by reporting to the litter hotline coordinated by the Environment Protection Authority. <http://epa.tas.gov.au/regulation/report-littering>
- Community members can assist with annual marine debris beach clean ups in Tasmania through the West Coast World Heritage Area program: <http://wha-marinedebris.blogspot.com.au/> or through a schools program, for example <http://www.tangaroablue.org/>
- The Sustainable Living Kingborough marine debris project has coordinated a number of dive clean-ups in the Kingborough region. Working with the University dive club, Council, Tassal, Marine and Safety Tasmania, and with support from local fishers, a recent clean up in Margate may become an annual event. <http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Fishing%20Today%20Apri%20May%202015.pdf> (page 11)
- Media engagement occurs through the Princes Melikoff Trust Marine Mammal Conservation Program (PMTMMCP) and the DPIWWE Marine Conservation Program, where staff regularly discuss marine mammal conservation and reducing the impacts of marine debris.
- Information brochures on marine mammal viewing produced through the PMTMMCP highlight issues around marine debris and encourage correct disposal of debris.

Respond, monitor and document wildlife entangled in marine debris

- DPIPWE Marine Conservation Program staff are trained for large whale and fur seal disentanglement.
- All marine mammal and seabird entanglements (including those on Macquarie Island) are documented on the AMMC National Marine Mammal Data Portal. <https://data.marinemammals.gov.au/>
- As part of long term monitoring programs, the DPIPWE Marine Conservation Program documents the occurrence and type of regurgitated marine debris at albatross and giant petrel breeding colonies (linked with the *Recovery plan for albatrosses and giant petrels*), including:
 - Albatross and petrels on Macquarie Island; and
 - Shy albatross at Albatross Isla.
- On Macquarie Island there is a monthly survey of beach washed plastics that seeks to evaluate rates of deposition and origin.

Research into seabird marine plastic ingestion

- Marine Conservation Program staff supervise research into the quantification of gross plastic ingestion rates among surface foraging seabirds and the effects of micro plastics on juvenile development.
- A study into 171 pre-fledging Short-tailed Shearwater chicks in Tasmania found that most of them (96%) had ingested plastic particles. <http://www.publish.csiro.au/?paper=MU13086>
- Marine debris collected by nesting Australasian Gannets on Pedra Branca is collected, identified and collated to investigate rates of occurrence, debris type and patterns through time.

Industry/State/Local Government coordinated marine debris initiatives

- The Derwent Estuary Program is a collaborative program between community, industry and government that promotes the use of best practice. Over the past decade, the number of local councils installing gross stormwater litter traps has increased. <http://www.derwentestuary.org.au>
- The Derwent Estuary Program also now has a dedicated stormwater project <http://www.derwentestuary.org.au/stormwater/> aimed at improving water quality by developing and implementing resources and programs for local government, business and industry, schools and the community. The program encourages Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD), regional stormwater resources for local government and community and school based education on how to prevent stormwater pollution.
- The larger salmonid marine farming companies are taking a proactive approach to marine debris clean ups regardless of origin of material. <http://www.huonaqua.com.au/sustainability/marine-environment/managing-marine-debris/>
- Tasmania's seafood industry actively pursues and promotes ecologically sustainable fishing and best practice environmental marine farming. As an example, the Australian Southern Rock Lobster Product Standard 2007 requires vessel operators to have an industry waste management plan that ensures disposal of all waste at sea is in accordance with Marpol 73/78 Convention and the relevant State environment protection legislation. Further, no plastic bait straps are taken to sea and on-board storage capacity for waste is sufficient for a fishing trip of typical maximum duration. <http://www.tsic.org.au/files/CleanGreen.pdf>. (p16)