



2025-26 State Budget Community Consultation

Department of Treasury and Finance

19 December 2024

2025-26 Budget submission from Oysters Tasmania

Executive Summary

Oysters Tasmania is the peak body for Tasmania’s oyster farmers, who are locals who live and work across regional Tasmania, who directly employ more than 320 Tasmanians, and who each year sustainably produce more than \$40 million of oysters, a delicacy of which Tasmania can be proud.

The submission contains four requests, ranked in order of priority.

1. \$110,000 each year from 2025-26 to 2028-29 to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (DNRET) to protect recreational fishers from biotoxins — required to deliver on the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania’s Future.
2. \$32,000 in 2025-26 to Oysters Tasmania for local marine environment data.
3. \$50,000 each year from 2025-26 to 2028-29 to Oysters Tasmania, as part of a matching arrangement with the Australian Government, to expand oyster farming into new waters.
4. Budget-neutral funding from TasWater to the Environment Protection Authority for responding to sewage-spills.
5. \$100,000 each year from 2025-26 to 2028-29 to the UTAS Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) to secure the food safety reputation of Tasmanian oysters.

Purpose	Recipient	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	Total
1. Biotoxins	DNRET	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$440,000
2. Sensors	Oysters Tasmania	\$32,000				\$32,000
3. Deep oyster farming	Oysters Tasmania	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$200,000
4. Sewage	EPA					\$0
5. Science	IMAS	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$400,000
Total		\$292,000	\$260,000	\$260,000	\$260,000	\$1,072,000



Request 1: Biotoxins

\$110,000 each year from 2025-26 to 2028-29 to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (DNRET) to protect recreational fishers from biotoxins — required to deliver on the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania’s Future.

Importance

Biotoxins kill.

The Tasmanian seafood industry currently tests for biotoxins and shares the results with the Department of Health. When the results indicate a significant risk, the Department of Health communicates to recreational fishers that a wide range of seafood should not be taken.

If this did not occur, recreational fishers would die.

The Department of Health could respond to a lack of biotoxin test data by permanently banning the recreational fishing of a range of seafood. However this would hurt Tasmanians and the Tasmanian way of life, and such a ban would be difficult to enforce.

Efficiency

As an alternative to biotoxin testing undertaken and shared by the seafood industry, the Department of Health could arrange its own biotoxin testing. However the biotoxin testing undertaken by the seafood industry costs the industry \$1 million each year, and testing by the Department of Health would cost just as much. As such, the \$110,000 annual request is the most efficient arrangement to secure the lives and lifestyles of recreational fishers.

Pre-existing Government commitment and priorities

The request is to maintain over the Budget and Forward Estimates period a \$110,000 expense first made in 2024-25 ([2024-25 Budget Paper 2 Volume 1](#)) and announced as part of the Government’s 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania’s Future ([“A Strong Plan for Tasmanian Fishing”](#)).

If the expense were not maintained, the Government’s Strong Plan would not be delivered and an election commitment would be undermined. The State Opposition committed to this expense on an annual basis.



\$110,000 calculation

The UTAS Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) calculated and published the annual \$110,000 figure in 2023 in its “Socio-economic study for marine biotoxin risk management in Tasmania”: https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1694823/Socio-economic-study-for-marine-biotoxin-risk-management-in-Tasmania.pdf

IMAS calculated that the annual benefit of biotoxin management for recreational fishers is valued at more than \$5.6 million, while contributions towards the costs of biotoxin management on behalf of recreational fishers were zero. This meant that the ratio of benefits to costs from biotoxin management for recreational fishers was infinite.

IMAS calculated that a \$110,000 contribution towards the costs of biotoxin management made on behalf of recreational fishers would result in recreational fishers enjoying a benefit of biotoxin management fifty times greater than the contribution made on their behalf. This would mean that the benefit cost ratio from biotoxin management for recreational fishers would align with the benefit cost ratio from biotoxin management enjoyed by the seafood industry.



Request 2: Sensors

\$32,000 in 2025-26 to Oysters Tasmania for local marine environment data to better understand climate change and pollution.

Importance

The Tasmanian oyster industry currently provides real-time water temperature, water depth, and salinity data from farms around Tasmania's coast, to regulators, researchers, and school students.

The data:

- improves food safety regulation and hence Tasmania's reputation for excellent seafood;
- indicates when and where to look for pollution into our waterways; and
- provides rich, local data relevant for climate change research and education.

Industry is able to provide this data because of a four-year, \$400,000 DNRET 'ShellMAP Sensor Network' grant that expires in March 2025.

In the absence of support for system maintenance, system reliability would suffer and the benefits outlined above would be threatened.

Efficiency

The requested \$32,000 expense excludes labour costs so represents a fraction of total system maintenance costs.

The requested \$32,000 expense represents a fraction of the costs of installing a system to deliver the data currently provided by industry.

Pre-existing Government commitment and priorities

The requested \$32,000 expense would secure the legacy of the Government's commitment — made by way of the 'ShellMAP Sensor Network' grant — to an oyster industry sensor system.

The request mirrors a request recently acceded to by the NSW Government for a one-year contribution to the maintenance of the NSW industry's sensor system.

\$32,000 calculation

The \$32,000 calculation consist of \$12,000 for dashboard subscription, \$12,000 for vessel and vehicle costs for on-site maintenance, and \$8,000 for replacement hardware and external technical expertise.



Request 3: Deep oyster farming

\$50,000 each year from 2025-26 to 2028-29 to Oysters Tasmania, as part of a matching arrangement with the Australian Government, to expand oyster farming into new waters.

Importance

Tasmanian aquaculture is currently dominated by finfish farming. Oyster farming could readily become a greater share of Tasmanian aquaculture and increase the size of the sector. What is required is the trialling of oyster farming in waters that are deeper than the intertidal zone traditionally used for oyster farming.

Oysters Tasmania has planned a \$7 million project to trial deep water oyster farming that is funded primarily by industry and requires a \$2 million cash contribution from outside industry. The Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre will provide the bulk of the cash contribution but has advised that government cash contributions will be required.

Efficiency

Oysters Tasmania seeks a \$200,000 contribution from the Tasmanian Government to give rise to trial work worth \$7 million, which in turn will facilitate a doubling of oyster production (from \$40 million to \$80 million) and employment (from 300+ to 600+ employees) within a decade. Oysters Tasmania will seek a matching contribution from the Australian Government in the lead up to the federal election.

Pre-existing Government commitment and priorities

A cash contribution from the Tasmanian Government would be consistent with the Government's membership of the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre, and with its commitment to support the growth of Tasmanian aquaculture (which is threatened by any federal restriction on the finfish industry).

Request 4: Sewage

Budget-neutral funding from TasWater to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) for responding to sewage-spills.

Importance

Avoidable sewage spills in oyster-growing areas cost the industry more than \$1 million each year. While such spills are a breach of obligations imposed on TasWater under Environment Protection Notices, the EPA has not imposed penalties for these breaches, and has advised the oyster industry of an intention to not pursue such enforcement, in part because of resource constraints.

Efficiency

Charging TasWater to facilitate the EPA's enforcement of the environmental obligations on TasWater would be budget neutral.

It would also change TasWater's behaviour and hence be economically efficient.

- With the exception of one-in-five-year extreme weather events, sewage spills can be avoided through actions such as disconnecting stormwater from TasWater's sewerage network, and deploying pump trucks and installing adequate storage at at-risk sites.
- These are low-cost actions, yet TasWater currently has no financial incentive to undertake enough of these actions to avoid sewage spills.
- Charging TasWater to fund EPA enforcement action, and the prospect of fines arising from this enforcement action, will create this financial incentive.

Pre-existing Government commitment and priorities

The Government requires the finfish industry to fund EPA activity relating to the finfish industry, yet the Government has no parallel arrangement with respect to TasWater, despite TasWater being the state's largest polluter.



Request 5: Science

\$100,000 each year from 2025-26 to 2028-29 to the UTAS Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) for to secure the food safety reputation of Tasmanian oysters.

Importance

Economic development and climate change are changing food safety threats, and new technologies are bringing a promise of improved food safety regulation. Research into these changing threats and potential efficiencies is required to ensure best-practice food safety that will underpin increased production and employment in Tasmania's oyster industry.

Efficiency

The requested \$400,000 expense over four years is less than the expense of the broader industry request to close the gap between the cost of research tasks agreed under the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement and funding provided under that agreement.

Pre-existing Government commitment and priorities

The requested expense represents the rolling over of the four-year, \$405,000 DNRET 'IMAS Services to ShellMAP' grant. Work under this grant has reduced the amount of time that the oyster industry needs to be closed to guarantee food safety following a pollution event.