

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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Ms Janie Finlay MP
Member for Bass

25 SEP 2026

Email: HAProcedure@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Finlay

In Parliament on 18 August 2026, you asked the following question on behalf of your constituent:

My question is from Jeff at St Helens. He wants to know how your work is going keeping east coast-ported rock lobster vessels, for small businesses, fishing out of their local ports. He says that if you don't get the work done soon, some of these operators are going to get out of the game because it's not financially viable for them to keep going with the current arrangements.

Firstly, thank you for the question on behalf of your constituent. Tasmania's southern rock lobster resource provides a valuable commercial fishery and supports a popular and iconic recreational and cultural fishery. It supports commercial fishers and vibrant regional communities around the State.

The East Coast Fishery is being managed to allow the stocks to rebuild. The Government has backed the rebuilding effort for more than a decade through the East Coast Rock Lobster Translocation Program, which has received Government funding since 2015 and has helped move around more than half a million undersized rock lobsters from the South West Coast to the East Coast. This program has played an important role in boosting stocks and improving catch rates on the East Coast. A further \$350 000 is committed over 2026-27 and 2028-29 to continue this work.

To support rebuilding, commercial catches on the East Coast are limited by a 'catch cap'. Once the catch cap has been caught each season, the East Coast fishery is closed to commercial fishing for the rest of that fishing year.

As the fishery continues to rebuild, fishers are achieving the highest catch rates in decades. However, a 'race to fish' has the potential to undermine many of the benefits of the quota system.

This is why I have met with and am continuing to meet with stakeholders, including the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Council, East Coast based fishers, and to consider the needs of the fishery.

I welcome the advice from the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Council about the Board's position on supporting a regionally based, commercially viable East Coast rock lobster fleet. This advice continues to inform consideration of arrangements to support the East Coast fleet.

I am expecting to also receive advice from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania ahead of decisions on future arrangements for the East Coast rock lobster fishery.

The Government's position on an East Coast fleet is clear. We are committed to a commercial fisheries model that maximises the benefit to Tasmania, Tasmanian fishers, their families and the communities they live and work in. This also includes an expectation that commercial and recreational fishers continue to have access to the East Coast fishery, with commercial access prioritising, or at least accommodating, the established East Coast fleet.

Thank you again for raising this matter on behalf of your constituent.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G Pearce'.

Hon Gavin Pearce MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water