

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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Mr Mark Shelton MP
Member for Lyons

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15 September 2026

Dear Mr Shelton 

In Parliament on 10 September 2026, you asked the following question on behalf of your constituents:

My question is from a farmer in my electorate quite close to Longford who had a GM canola trial site in the early 2000s. He asks what the Government is doing to simplify regulatory requirements for the former GM trial sites across the state while retaining Tasmania's GM moratorium. Can the Minister outline what the Government is doing to reduce the regulatory burden on affected landholders?

Thank you for the question on behalf of farmers in your electorate who have been maintaining GM canola permit sites for many years.

The Tasmanian Government remains steadfast in its commitment to maintaining Tasmania's GMO moratorium while ensuring that our regulatory systems remain practical, proportionate and guided by the best available science.

As Members would be aware, GM canola trials occurred in Tasmania between 1998 and 2000, before the State's GMO moratorium was introduced. Since that time, affected landholders have operated under permits or exemptions and site management plans designed to manage any potential regrowth and demonstrate Tasmania's GMO-free status.

Following a review of the GM canola audit program, the Government has approved a new GM Canola Site Sign-Off Framework. Developed with the support of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, the framework establishes clear, evidence-based criteria to determine when a former GM canola site can be considered extremely low risk and no longer requires the same level of regulatory oversight.

The framework considers five key factors, including the length of time since GM canola was grown, whether any volunteers appear following cultivation, the recorded history of the site, scientific modelling demonstrating the decline of the seedbank, and any remaining risks associated with the site.

Where a site satisfies all of these criteria, it can be formally signed off. This means permits can be surrendered or exemptions revoked, routine inspections by the Department of Natural Resources

and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) can cease, and landholders can grow conventional canola without needing to notify the Department.

Importantly, these changes do not alter Tasmania's GMO moratorium in any way. Growing GM canola remains prohibited in Tasmania, and landholders continue to have an obligation to report any suspected GM canola plants should they appear in the future.

As announced recently, this approach is expected to reduce red tape for 77 former GM canola sites across Tasmania, providing certainty for farmers who have responsibly managed these sites for many years while maintaining the integrity of Tasmania's GMO policy settings and our valuable clean, green brand.

For sites that do not yet meet the criteria, NRE Tas will work directly with landholders to support ongoing management and help them progress towards future sign-off where appropriate.

This is a sensible reform that reduces unnecessary compliance requirements where the evidence shows the risk is extremely low, while continuing to protect Tasmania's GMO-free reputation and market advantages.

Thank you for raising this important matter on behalf of your Lyons constituents I trust this is a welcome outcome for them and other farmers across Tasmania.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G Pearce', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Hon Gavin Pearce MP

Minister for Primary Industries and Water