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Statement

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Minister Plibersek has put city politics ahead of process and people

The Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek, has announced that she will reexamine a decade-old decision to grant approval for salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour. This has set a very dangerous precedent.

As a one-off, the decision is a shameful capitulation, backing environmental activists over science. More broadly, Minister Plibersek has willingly pushed the door open, giving a nod to every activist organisation's playbook and their intent of shutting down, not only our region, but every region's most profitable and important businesses.

To me, this smacks of an alarming move away from process. I ask the Minister, where will this end? Is it her intention to afford the same opportunity to every activist group on every decision that has ever been made? And how far back will she go, 10-years, 20-years ...?

In her media statement, the Minister says she was 'beginning consultation'. This is a misrepresentation of the truth. Consultation happened and concluded a decade ago.

Further, making this decision under the guise of protecting the Maugean Skate has absolutely no scientific basis. At best, the Minister is kowtowing to some loose, unsubstantiated correlation. The truth is, there is absolutely no evidence of a causal link between salmon farming and the reduction in Skate numbers.

Yes, conservation of the Skate must be a priority and the work to preserve this endangered species is already underway. The Minister must give the Conservation Action Plan time to deliver some meaningful data so we can move forward on the evidence.

Minister Plibersek and her government have shown, that under all circumstances, they will side with environmental activists, to win votes in inner city Melbourne and Sydney, rather than support the West Coast and their industries crucial to Tasmania's prosperity. Don't they understand that they are playing dice with the very essence of the West Coast - hundreds of direct jobs, thousands of downstream jobs and the very viability of every township in the region.

Every key stakeholder - government, industry and local communities - is acting in good faith and progressing towards a win-win outcome. It's a shame the federal government has no faith in their capacity or this good intent.

Unlike Labor, the Coalition actively invested to build a strong and prosperous West Coast, because we understand the region and its people. Population does not equate to productivity and the West Coast deserves its fair share of support given the wealth it creates for Tasmania.

I call on all Tasmanian Labor members of parliament to publicly denounce this move by their minister and back the West Coast's crucial industries before it's too late.

ENDS