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Chair
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
By email: Rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

RE: Senate Inquiry on the Performance of the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority

Dear Senate Inquiry Committee Members

Please accept this joint letter as a submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Performance of the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority (AMSA), in particular the performance of AMSA in Tasmania since the national body took ownership of the delivery of maritime safety on 1 July, 2018.

This letter acknowledges the submission of the Tasmanian Industry Seafood Council (TISC) and the matters raised within their submission.

In 2013 Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST) was made responsible for the delivery of maritime safety services in the State on behalf of AMSA and was able to ensure the Tasmanian domestic commercial vessel fleet conformed to all national maritime safety requirements, including under a full cost recovery model through an Administration Fee and Fee for Service. Tasmania was the only State to undertake this and became a respected marine safety body trusted by the Tasmanian community and industry.

The standard and model of the marine safety operation administered by MAST was recognised when Tasmania was not required to contribute to the transition funding package as we were the only jurisdiction fully cost recovering prior to implementation of the national Law.

While we acknowledge that there had to be a change in regards to making the laws nationally consistent, MAST provided a well-run, personal, service to the commercial fishing industry, as well as recreational fishers. Unfortunately as a national body with outlets in each State and Territory, AMSA currently does not have capacity to provide the more personable, face-to-face in-depth service that Tasmanians were accustomed to and expected.

Tasmania's wild catch and aquaculture seafood industry is worth a combined \$947 million (2016-17). Our abalone, rock lobster, oysters and salmon are particularly popular to international markets and the industry is a valuable social and economic contributor providing thousands of direct and indirect jobs, many which are in regional areas of Tasmania. Tasmania is also the home port of a number of vessels that fish the Commonwealth fisheries.

Both prior and subsequent to AMSA taking ownership of marine safety nationally, the Tasmanian Government, received representations from TSIC, a number of related companies and private individuals, raising concern about the changes and the potential for negative impacts on their businesses.

The overall concern expressed by industry is that the new national model is substandard to the former Tasmanian model. Other areas of concern that industry has outlined include:

Cost – The new model under AMSA is complex and incorporates a direct cost recovery levy, fee for service, shifted costs to private service providers and indirect costs. It needs to be resolved and communicated to industry how the final levy model will be structured and the measures taken to ensure there are not significant cost increases.

Red tape – The new national system is complex, with little guidance for the industry to help them through new processes, a lack of on-ground support, particularly through the transition and concerns about enforcement.

Safety Outcomes – The core of the changes was to ensure increased safety measures that were meaningful, cost effective and easily able to be reflected 'on the ground'. It is vital that the high standard set in Tasmania, and supported across the industry is maintained.

Tasmania acknowledges and supports a nationally consistent approach to maritime safety, provided that a national approach performs better and delivers improved outcomes over the model it replaces.

The commercial fishing and aquaculture industries provide significant employment and provide wild catch and farmed seafood that has become synonymous with the Tasmanian brand.

The safety of Tasmanians who work at sea is paramount and we will continue to work with the Australian Government, AMSA and industry to ensure the best model is delivered.

Yours sincerely

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Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water