NEIGHBOURS OF FISH FARMING — HUON ELECTORATE

Where do the candidates stand?

The 2026 Legislative Council election for Huon is just around the corner – polling day is on Saturday, 2nd May.

We asked all **six candidates** to answer a series of simple questions to indicate where they stand on issues of concern to NOFF members so that our community can make an informed choice.

Three of the six candidates did not respond.

The three candidates that did respond all voted unanimously – the differences lie in the nuances of their positions, which we have included below in full.

	Paul Gibson	Michael Rowan	Clare Glade-Wright
OUR WATERWAYS			
Do you support the removal of industrial salmon pens from all of Tasmania's shallow waterways (including Storm Bay and Bass Strait)?	✓ **Yes** "The evidence is that industrial salmon farming is doing immense damage to our marine life. It is the job of government to set limits such that ecosystems are undamaged and to independently monitor compliance."	✓ **Yes** "I am not able to answer this without a definition of 'shallow', and in any case the depth of the water is not the important measure but rather the capacity of the water in the location to disperse uneaten food and faeces so as to leave at best no measurable effect and at worst no obvious deleterious effect on the environment with measurement inside the pens, under the pens, and at specified distanced from the stocked pens, with the determination of sampling locations and the measurements taken by an independent scientific body. Whether the waters in which the pen is located can meet these requirements will be determined by, I guess (I am not a scientist) the temperature of the water, the depth of the water, the rate of current flow, and the percentage of interchange between the water mass ebbing and flowing through the pens and surrounding water masses. My answer to	✓ **Yes** "I support the findings of the Tasmanian Legislative Council Fin Fish Farming Inquiry (final report released in 2022) which recommends reducing inshore fish farming, especially in sensitive environments. It stated "Develop a plan, in consultation with industry, scientific, and community stakeholders, to reduce inshore finfish farming sites, with priority given to ceasing operations in sensitive, sheltered, and biodiverse areas."

		2(a) below gives more detail on how I would deal with this problem. 'Shallow' can also relate to the distance between the pens and the shore, which is important in relation to light and noise pollution. While we cannot expect the industry to create no nuisance at all as reported by the most sensitive adjacent landowner – adopting such a principal for regulation of environmental nuisance generally would, for example, end live music in pubs – we can expect best practice measures in relation to noise and light, which would require significant changes to current practices I understand."	

Do you support the conversion of all inland fresh-water hatcheries to fully recycling, self-contained operation to eliminate downstream pollution?	✓ **Yes** "Absolutely – Closed loop is the right method."	✓ **Yes** "Again this needs some precision. Huon Aquaculture reports that their facility at Whale Point recycles 98% of its fresh water intake. That might be the technological limit at the moment. That facility is not a hatchery – I don't have data on the hatcheries – but I will push for a similar standard for those facilities. One way to clean up the process is to require the hatcheries to take water downstream from where they return it to the river. If they cannot do this because the water downstream of their discharge is not sufficiently clean for their use this shows their process is unacceptably polluting."	✓ **Yes** "I support the conversion of all inland freshwater hatcheries to fully recycling, self-contained systems to eliminate downstream pollution. Closed or recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) can drastically reduce nutrient discharge, improve water efficiency, and biosecurity. While the upfront costs and energy demands are higher, those can be managed with phased implementation, incentives, and investment in efficient technologies. The environmental benefits and long-term sustainability make this a sensible direction."

REGULATION

Will you support further	✓ **Yes**	✓ **Yes**	✓ **Yes**

strengthening the independence and transparency of the Tasmanian EPA, which, even after the changes introduced in 2021, is still effectively prevented from prioritising environmental factors over economic considerations?	"The EPA should operate for the environment - Economic factors are not its responsibilty."	"I will write a new environment act based on the principle that the economy owes a duty of care to the environment, rather than, as at present, that the economy must minimise its harm to the environment to the extent that this is cost effective. *The idea that the market sets the price for a commodity or service and the environment bears the cost of meeting it is way beyond its use by date.* Modern environment acts are explicit about this. From my initial research it seems the Estonian act might be the best to copy, though the EU generally has moved to a 'circular economy' conception of the relationship between the economy and the environment. If elected I will self-fund a study tour to the EU to talk with parliamentarians, ministers, business leaders and environmentalists about how their new laws are working, and my rewriting of our act will be informed by this."	"I support further strengthening the independence and transparency of the Tasmanian EPA, including reforms that ensure it can prioritise environmental protection without being constrained by industry capture. A regulator is most effective when it is clearly independent, operates with strong transparency, and is empowered to make decisions grounded in science and long-term environmental outcomes. The EPA must be working for the people, not just for industry."
Will you support the salmon industry's regulatory framework being changed to require the EPA to give priority to the protection of endangered species such as the Red Handfish?	✓ **Yes** "Endangered species are the indicator that something is very wrong with an ecosystem."	✓ **Yes** "This would be a first good example where the economy owes a duty of care to the environment."	✓ **Yes** "I support changing the salmon industry's regulatory framework so that the EPA is required to prioritise the protection of endangered species such as the Red Handfish. No job should ever come at the expense of a species becoming extinct."

POLLUTION

Do you support increased regulation of the Tasmanian salmon industry to ensure there is no repetition of mass salmon deaths causing pollution on local beaches in the Huon and Channel?	✓ **Yes** "Of course and I strongly disapprove of the extent of deaths of fish in terms of animal cruelty."	✓ **Yes** "With a new act as above, the responsibility of the EPA becomes to measure all industrial activity including salmon farming to report on any *change* to the environment which can be causally attributed to the activity, and any *harm* to the environment which can be causally attributed to that change. Establishing any harm then leads to the activity being shut down, or another activity being established which more than offsets the environmental harm to the first, with the net positive benefit to the environment independently audited by a body with as much expertise and independence as the systems we have in place for financial auditing and OHS monitoring."	✓ **Yes** "I support increased regulation of the Tasmanian salmon industry to ensure there is no repetition of mass salmon deaths causing pollution on local beaches in the Huon and Channel. Stronger, well-designed regulation can help prevent environmental harm, protect local communities, and ensure the industry operates sustainably over the long term."
Do you support a significant reduction in salmon stocking density in the salmon pens in the Huon and Channel, to ensure there is no repetition of mass salmon deaths causing pollution on local beaches?	✓ **Yes** No comment	✓ **Yes** "I have answered this as you see but the question is tendentious, which I think is unwise. It makes the supporters of the salmon industry dismiss those with concerns as prejudiced against the industry. I would rather have said yes to 'Do you support limiting the stocking density in the salmon pens in the Huon and Channel to what is required to reduce the chance of an outbreak of disease causing mass deaths to no more than once in a hundred years, without the need to use antibiotics which are released into the environment around the pens to control mass deaths of fish'. This puts planning for the location and management of the salmon industry in	✓ **Yes** "If the experts tell us that destocking is needed, then I support a significant reduction in salmon stocking density in the salmon pens in the Huon and Channel to ensure there is no repetition of mass salmon deaths causing pollution on local beaches. Basing decisions on credible scientific advice helps reduce environmental risk, improve animal welfare, and protect surrounding marine ecosystems and communities."

		the same kind of a risk management framework as society uses for planning of housing (in relation to flood, for example). It takes it out of the emotional 'environment vs jobs' contest, and puts it in a rational evidence based decision system, Which we need to do. When it is 'environment vs jobs' the environment almost always loses. Time for change. I add that after researching the concerns of both the World Food Program and the UNs Food and Agriculture Organisation it is clear to me that the use of antibiotics in aquaculture is a major health risk since it inevitably spreads antibiotics as sub-lethal doses into the waters surrounding the pens. World-wide over six million people died from antibiotic resistant diseases last year. In Australia it was more than the road toll. I have observed Huon Aquaculture's attempts to reduce and hopefully eliminate the need to use antibiotics to control disease in the pens by selective breeding of infection resistant strains of fish, and vaccination. It appears their results are promising, but also that they are pursuing this as 'in house' research. Given the risk of a global pandemic from antibiotic resistant pathogens it should be at least a state if not a national priority to advance this research with a view to banning the use of antibiotics in any situation where they leak into the environment. This would require the Tasmanian government to facilitate research collaborations between Huon and other salmon	

		companies, and universities, the CSIRO and perhaps CSL. Antibiotic resistant is world-wide a major health challenge. Tasmania has the potential here to have a world-wide impact for the good. That is the kind of thing our Legislative Council should be pursuing. Thinking large and long.”	