

Baby food left hole but now fish fill it



By SONIA BYRNES

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TWO years ago an organic baby food processing plant at Parramatta Creek was snapped up by Huon Aquaculture.

After a \$6 million upgrade the plant now processes close to 13,000 tonnes of salmon and employs 50-60 people.

Minister for Primary Industries Bryan Green yesterday toured the facility, which he said would be vital for Tasmania's rapidly expanding salmon industry.

"The value of salmon production has increased by \$250 million in the past five years, growing by almost \$1 million a week," Mr Green said.

"Last year the industry produced over 30,000 tonnes of fish and now employs over 1000 people."

With major plans for expansion at Macquarie Harbour on the West Coast progressing, Huon Aquaculture co-owner and director Frances Bender said the industry would continue to create even more jobs.

"The flow-on effect for employment numbers is fairly significant. For each position created there are at least four other jobs that flow on from that direct employment," Mrs Bender said.

Huon Aquaculture recently launched a range of value-added products and online ordering, Reserve Selection, which Mrs Bender said would only help grow the business and demand for Tasmanian salmon products.

Mrs Bender said the



PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM: Salmon at Huon Aquaculture.

Tasmanian produce could now be delivered directly to the home or office.

"You need to keep up if you want to be relevant," she said.

Mrs Bender said Huon Aquaculture and two other companies had been progressing plans to extend the lease area at Macquarie Harbour, but it was a project that needed to be done sustainably.

"The industry is a great industry for the state, provided you can grow the industry in a sustainable manner into the future," she said.

"It's important to us that we find that balance because part of our marketing story to the consumer is the environment.

"Managing the environment is the key to a successful future for us all," she said.

Mrs Bender said the industry had the potential to help the region, especially the West Coast, overcome the loss of opportunities that came with the demise of other industries.



A BIG FISH: Primary Industries and Water Minister Bryan Green and Huon Aquaculture factory manager Simon Fraser with one of the salmon being processed at Parramatta Creek. Pictures: Jason Hollister.