



## HOW TASMANIA'S EGG INDUSTRY WAS HATCHED



### THE APPLE ISLE'S INVESTMENT IN EGGS

**Tasmania has the cleanest air and the cleanest water in the world. It's mostly thanks to its geographic location close to the Antarctic.**

Such environmental factors make Tassie eggs a highly sought after source of protein.

Tasmania's commercial egg industry was totally regulated since its early beginnings under the Tasmanian Egg Marketing Board.

In around 1988, the practice of "vesting" of eggs in the Tasmanian Egg Marketing Board was abolished, meaning farmers could undertake their own marketing.

The (Egg Marketing Board) EMB still controlled "quotas", so farmers couldn't have more than 20 hens without a quota.

The board employed an "Inspector" who counted everyone's hens twice a year and investigated people selling eggs without



Image: Tasmanian Poultry Society

quotas. They also undertook a school education programme.

Tasmania egg identity and Chairman of Australian eggs, Danny Jones, can recall there was a fortnightly payment based on the number of birds you had possibly equating to around 12 cents per dozen, and quotas could be traded, usually at \$12/bird.

The board also operated a pulping and pasteurisation plant in Hobart and was required by the Act to take seconds eggs (to prevent them from getting into the market... it was - and still is - illegal to sell cracked eggs).

Around 1999, after SA deregulated, the Tasmanian Government undertook a review of the board, and with the ACCC watching the Government sought the view of producers about the viability of the board.

Most producers wanted it to remain, but Pure Foods, not seeing much benefit in the levy payments pretty much bought about its demise in around 2001.

A new egg industry act was legislated commencing 2002 which saw the end of quotas and the vesting of cracked eggs, and the winding up of the board.

# *“When Coles and Woolworths started to purchase eggs from the mainland it put Tasmania’s egg industry under pressure”*

There was a local farmer group, the Tasmanian Commercial Egg Producers Association (TCEPA).

While the board existed (and pretty much ran it), it was quite active, but once the board wound up, there was little interest in continuing. The manager of the EMB acted as TCEPA’s executive officer and treasurer.

Pure Foods bought the premises and pulping/pasteurising equipment and purchased cracked eggs from other producers. We did this for around five years, but it was not a viable operation, and we ultimately sold the premises and equipment to a cheese maker.

Not long after, Coles and Woolworths started to purchase eggs from mainland farmers, putting the local industry under some pressure. Pure Foods purchased several producers between 1998 and 2005 which assisted the industry to consolidate and maintain viability.

The Department of Primary Industries Food Safety Branch then assumed a watchdog



Image: Pure Foods Tasmania

role and introduced the requirement for all producers to be accredited and undertook annual audits of framers (or accepted Egg Corp Assured).

In 2011, The Egg Food Safety Program commenced and in 2012 the State Government introduced a cap restricting the number of birds in a cage.

In around 2012, the Labour/Greens government wanted to ban cages, but ultimately agreed to a reduction in current cages and a ban on new cages. At this stage there are only 2 cage farmers.

Pure Foods agreed to physically scrap cages in return for a grant to construct new free range facilities.

