

Tyrrell Calls for Helium Policy U-Turn as Tasmania Secures Path to National Sovereignty

Tasmania leads the way nationally for Helium and its Reintroduction to the Critical Minerals List

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[Independent Senator for Tasmania, Tammy Tyrrell](#), has called on the Federal Government to immediately reinstate Natural Helium to the Critical Minerals List, following the successful assignment of key exploration licenses in Tasmania for the Orford and Franklin projects to commercial Helium pioneer; [Natural Helium Tasmania](#).

The assignment of these licenses (covering 6,903 km²) marks the official mobilisation of a new, green high-tech industry for the state. [Senator Tyrrell](#) argues this breakthrough proves that Tasmania holds the key to fixing the national supply crisis triggered by the 2023 closure of the Darwin helium plant.

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Senator Tammy Tyrrell

“When the Darwin plant closed, Australia lost its helium sovereignty overnight. We became 100% dependent on imports for the gas that keeps our MRI machines running and our defence systems operational,” Senator Tyrrell said.

“Weeks later, the Government took helium off the Critical Minerals List. That was a mistake, plain and simple. Our supply chains are now more vulnerable than ever, and in an era of trade wars, we cannot rely on the goodwill of

overseas partners for our national security.”

A Sovereign Solution in Tasmania

The Orford and Franklin projects target deposits with historical helium concentrations of up to



Senator Tyrrell Speaking in the Australian Senate, Feb 2026

4.83%—nearly 16 times the global commercial threshold. Senator Tyrrell highlighted that these projects are ready to de-risk Australia's domestic supply.

"Helium isn't just for party balloons; it's fundamental to a resilient health system. Without it, MRI machines stop, and cancer and heart disease diagnoses are delayed. By supporting Tasmanian projects like these, we aren't just creating regional jobs—we are protecting our hospitals." Senator Tyrrell noted that natural helium is a critical input for the Future Made in Australia agenda, specifically regarding:

- AUKUS Readiness: The billions invested in submarines and defence systems that rely heavily on helium for advanced cooling.
- High-Tech Growth: Local data centres, like the Firmus AI facility in Launceston, and burgeoning quantum computing sectors require helium's unique thermal properties to function.
- The Green Transition: Natural helium is essential for the technologies driving the energy transition to net-zero emissions.

"If we're serious about being a tech-forward nation, we have to invest in the inputs. We have the resources right here in Tasmania to not only meet our own needs but to become a global exporter. We need to get Natural Helium back on the Critical Minerals List to unlock the investment and fast-track the approvals these projects deserve."

Project Mobilisation

Natural Helium Tasmania will now move into an active mobilization phase for the 2026 testing program. This includes CSIRO-led soil gas surveys and AI-driven subsurface mapping to ensure low-impact, high-precision extraction.

"This is a major economic opportunity for our state. It means long-term, high-skill jobs and regional development," Senator Tyrrell concluded. "It's time for the Federal Government to stop dragging its feet and recognise that Tasmanian helium is a national priority."

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