

fishing *lines*

Representing
Victorian
Recreational
Fishers



In this issue...

PARTICIPATION IN FISHING

Counting fishers

Catching kids for fishing

Gearing up

April Vokey is the new kid on the block

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Recreational Fishing Code of Conduct

Representing
Victorian
Recreational
Fishers



VRFish has developed this Code of Conduct for recreational boat, shore, river, stream and jetty fishers in Victoria.

Recreational fishers have a responsibility to look after fisheries resources for the benefit of the environment and future generations of fishers. Recreational fishers should also show respect for other users of the aquatic environment. This Code of Conduct provides guidelines to minimise conflicts on the water, and should be adopted by all recreational fishers.



Awareness of and compliance with fishing regulations



Always seek permission when entering private property



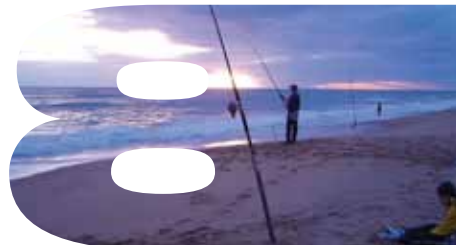
Respect the rights of other anglers and users



Use established access roads and tracks



Protect the environment



Attend to your fishing gear and value your catch



Carefully return undersized, protected or unwanted catch back to the water



Education - pass on your knowledge



Fish species and other organisms must not be relocated/ transferred into other water bodies



Respect indigenous sites and values

For a full version of the Code of Conduct, please go to:
www.vrfish.com.au/Corporate_Documents
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fishing lines

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FISHING LINES

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Message from the Minister

As the Minister responsible for fisheries, I am pleased to see people from all across Victoria enjoy the opportunity to drop a line in the water. Recreational fishing is a fantastic way to spend time with family and friends.



The Andrews Labor Government's 2015-16 Victorian Budget provided \$20 million in new initiatives and services to help grow recreational fishing in Victoria by encouraging families to get outdoors and enjoy fishing.

The Labor Government's *Target One Million* plan will grow participation to one million fishers by 2020, boost fish stocking from three to five million per annum, improve fishing opportunities and facilities and strengthen fishing club membership.

Our plan recognises the social and economic value of recreational fishing to the State. It is all about making sure we get more people fishing, more often.

Victoria is home to a diverse array of inland, estuarine and marine fishing experiences and we are committed to making sure Victoria becomes the premier fishing location in Australia.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the VRFish staff, Board and State Council members for their efforts in helping us strive to achieve this goal. The members, who volunteer so much of their time to make a positive contribution to recreational fishing, are to be commended.

The Labor Government values the vital role played by VRFish as the peak body, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with VRFish over the coming years to grow the recreational fishing community across all regions of Victoria.

The Hon. Jaala Pulford, MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional Development

The Minister and VRFish Chair cut the ribbon to the new VRFish offices.



Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Winter 2015 edition of *Fishing Lines*. The central theme of this edition is a focus on participation in recreational fishing. Increased participation presents a range of exciting opportunities to grow recreational fishing in Victoria, a popular activity that is close to the heart of so many Victorians and their families.



Increasing participation is in line with the Victorian State Government's commitment to increase the number of recreational fishers to one million by 2020 under the *Target One Million* initiative.

Growing participation is not only about increasing the numbers of fishers, it also encompasses:

- Promoting fishing as an opportunity for Victorians of all ages to experience our wonderful natural places with their families and friends
- Making fishing an accessible activity and sport for children,
- Demonstrating the lifestyle opportunities and health benefits of fishing to Victorians of all ages and cultures, including growing participation amongst our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) members of the community
- Encouraging more women in our community to experience recreational fishing, more frequently and on a longer-term basis.

Target One Million, and the aspirational motivation it represents to increase fishing participation, will deliver many more benefits than will be reflected in the numbers alone. As mentioned, growing participation is more than just about the numbers. It's also about the health, well-being and social benefits that will be delivered, not only for fishers, but for the health and resilience of the broader community and economy.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude for the support the new Government has accorded VRFish, especially through the encouraging recognition of VRFish as the peak body representing Victoria's many recreational fishers.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and thank the Andrews Government for their vision and commitment to recreational fishing in Victoria. I would also like to express our sincere gratitude for the support the new Government has accorded VRFish, especially through the encouraging recognition of VRFish as the peak body representing Victoria's many recreational fishers.

VRFish is committed to representing all current and future generations of Victorian fishers. We are working together with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that Victoria's recreational fisheries continue to be high quality, sustainable, accessible and can be enjoyed by all who would like to fish, both now and into the future.

Russell Conway
Chair
VRFish

Message from the General Manager

Welcome to the new edition of *Fishing Lines*. A lot has happened since the previous edition in Spring last year. The New Year started with a bang and the timely advocacy of VRFish helped make sure recreational fishers can still fish for thresher sharks and avoid another mako shark debate. We thank the Australian Government for supporting recreational fishers on this issue.

Likewise, much effort was put into summer proofing the iconic trout fishery at Lake Toolondo and it was great to see the new Andrews Government hit the ground running and release 5,000 mega litres into the lake in January. A fish kill has been avoided and the lake is producing brown trout over 2 kg on a regular basis.

The goal to reach 1 million fishers by 2020 is an aspirational target that recognises the full social and economic value recreational fishing contributes to the State. It is a first for Australia and seeks to ensure recreational fishing grows.

Fast forward to June and the Geelong Star remains a concern to recreational fishing peak bodies across the nation. It has been a high priority for game fishers from Queensland to Western Australia. Much work has been done to ensure any impacts to recreational fishing are minimised. At the time of writing, we are locked in negotiations to make sure our \$9 million southern bluefin tuna fishery in South west Victoria is protected.

As eluded to above, we have a new Government and a new set of policies on recreational fishing. This edition reflects the new policy direction and is all about increasing participation and recognising the many benefits that come from such a goal. The new Minister responsible for fisheries, Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development, Jaala Pulford has wasted no time in getting down to work. The Minister has met with VRFish staff and members on numerous occasions and was a special guest at our office opening

and State Council meeting in Ballarat. We thank the Minister for her support and look forward to working with her over the next 4 years.

The goal to reach 1 million fishers by 2020 is an aspirational target that recognises the full social and economic value recreational fishing contributes to the State. It is a first for Australia and seeks to ensure recreational fishing grows. *Target One Million* is great as it recognises the need to get kids off the couch, away from the TV and iPads, and out into the outdoors.

In addition to the swift action at Lake Toolondo, work has started on many other policies such as halting commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay and establishing trout cod fisheries in the north east.

We are fortunate to have such excellent articles in this edition, from Paul Carter to April Vokey and Matt Barwick. Paul is already well known to many Victorian fishers and our members. April Vokey is recognised internationally for the work she does teaching people how to fly fish and growing participation. Matt Barwick from RecFish Research is a shining light when it comes to making sure fisheries research is practical, understandable and can be adopted by fishers. He has also helped ensure State bodies such as VRFish benefit from targeted programs designed to build capacity amongst the next generation of recreational fishing advocates.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board for their efforts and guidance, not to mention our State Council members for their tireless volunteering to improve recreational fishing and represent grass roots anglers and divers.

Finally, to our staff Michelle Wenner and Alison Wheeler I also say thank you for your hard work and professionalism.

Until next time, we hope you enjoy this edition. Please be sure to stay safe on or near the water.



...much effort was put into summer proofing the iconic trout fishery at Lake Toolondo and it was great to see the new Andrews Government hit the ground running and release 5,000 mega litres into the lake in January.



Dallas D'Silva
General Manager

Counting fishers, not fish

BY MATT BARWICK
Recfishing Research



Studying fisheries can be tough. Someone once said "counting fish is just like counting trees... except they're invisible and they move around a lot". So, if counting fish is tough, spare a thought for the poor researchers whose job it is to count fishers...

At least a fish is always a fish ... but is a fisher still a fisher when they pick up a golf club?

Photo: Matt Daniel

And the fun doesn't stop once the counting is done, either. Once we know how many people are fishing, it's often difficult for managers to then know what to do with this information. Is the objective to grow the number of recreational fishers? If you were to ask the crowd of fishers on the Mordialloc Pier when the snapper, calamari and garfish are biting they might not think so!

Nevertheless, the benefits of growing the population of Australian fishers are clear. In 2000, The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey (NRIFS) estimated that recreational fishing contributes approximately \$1.8 billion to the Australian economy (and this figure is likely to be much higher today). More fishers = more economic growth. Additionally, fishing has been shown to provide a range of health and wellbeing benefits to those who participate¹. So perhaps in this era of growing obesity, heart disease and other lifestyle-associated health concerns, more people should be opening tackle boxes instead of pill boxes?

The Victorian Government's 'Target One Million' program announced in the lead up to the 2014 election seeks to grow the economic and social benefits of fishing enjoyed by Victorians by increasing participation in fishing from 721,000 Victorians annually, to one million. Fortunately, the Program is based on a plan for increased investment in fishing infrastructure, stocking and artificial fish habitat to provide more fishing locations and better quality fishing experiences, so the folks on the Mordialloc Pier can continue to enjoy high quality fishing in relative peace.

Of course, the old adage rings true: you can't manage what you can't measure, and so there will continue to be a need to monitor the number of people fishing – both in Victoria, and other states and territories. If done right, future surveys will enable us to understand and deliver the sort of fishing experiences that people crave, whilst ensuring that management arrangements are appropriate.

What we know

We know that Australians have a long-lasting love affair with fishing. An estimated 3.36 million Australian residents aged 5 years or older fished at least once in the 12 months prior to May 2000 according to the last national survey. This represented a national recreational fishing participation rate of 19.5%.

By international standards this highlights that we Aussies enjoy fishing more than most: on average across countries with reliable statistics, the participation rate is around 10%² (though we lag behind countries such as Norway where fishing participation can be as high as 32%).

Unfortunately, despite Australia's long-lasting romance with fishing, there are signs that the honeymoon may be ending. A number of statewide surveys have been conducted since the national survey in 2000, and all have reported a decline in participation – in the case of South Australia and the Northern Territory, by more than 25% (see Table 1 below).

We have a few clues regarding causes for declining participation in fishing too. A study by Dr Steven Sutton from James Cook University and his colleagues explored reasons why Queenslanders had ceased fishing, and reported that lack of time, loss of interest and poor fishing quality were driving factors³. Another study by Dr Jacki Schirmer from the University of Canberra found that South Australian fishers who reported that they fish less than they used to, cite lack of free time, poor weather, rising costs and poor quality fishing as key reasons⁴. Our time-poor predicament is supported by the Australian Bureau of Statistic's 2006 time use survey, which reported that we are spending 1 hour and 45 minutes less time per week on recreation and leisure activities compared to 1997, and around 2 hours and 13 minutes extra working each week. However this may not be the whole picture; in terms of how we are spending our remaining recreational time in 2006, it seems that we had increased our consumption of television and internet by almost exactly the same amount of time per week that we have reduced our time spent on sport and outdoor activities (around 1 hour). Imagine what percentage of our available time we must be investing in the consumption of electronic media as a nation today, in light of studies showing that our teenagers spend around four hours each day watching television⁵, and the average Australian spends one minute in five using social media⁶.

Declines in fishing participation have also been reported in various parts of North America, Europe and Oceania, with studies linking declining participation to growing population density and gross domestic product. In short, as we lead more urban lifestyles and work harder, it seems fewer people are fishing⁷.

Continued...

National fishing participation rate
19.5%

Table 1 'Best available' recreational fishing participation estimates for residents of each jurisdiction in Australia.

Source: Griffiths et al 2014

State	Year	No. of Fishers	Nat Survey Estimate	Change in number	% change relative to 2000
NT	2010	31,790	43,932	-12,142	-27.64
QLD	2011	703,020	746,619	-43,599	-5.83
NSW	2000	998,501	998,501	-	-
VIC	2000	549,803	549,803	-	-
TAS	2008	118,300	125,017	-6,618	-5.29
SA	2008	236,463	328,227	-91,764	-27.95
WA	2000	479,425	479,425	-	-

Continued

Counting fishers, not fish

When did we hold the meeting where we agreed to trade our time on the water with family and friends for hours spent blankly staring at a screen, whether for work or play? And what does this mean for our favored Australian pastime, or our relationship with our land and waterways and the farmers and fishers who utilise them to provide our food and natural fibres?

Fortunately some countries have managed to reverse this concerning trend. Canada's *Go Fish BC* campaign which aims to increase fishing participation in British Columbia has arrested a ten year trend of declining participation, with 6% more anglers reported in 2013 compared to 2005⁸. This has been the result of increased investment in fishing infrastructure, and programs to teach people to fish, including free rod, reel and tackle box loans. They've also introduced a novel 'fishing buddies' program, which encourages experienced fishers to introduce new or lapsed fishers to the joy of wetting a line. The development and promotion of 'family fishing waters', which are easily accessible and full of catchable fish has had a great impact too.

Also clear, is the need for continued investment in long-term monitoring to track what recreational fishers are catching, how often they are fishing, what they think of their fishing experiences, and what they do when they're not fishing.

A study exploring reasons underpinning the reversal of a two-decade declining trend in fishing participation in the United States also reported an 11% increase in participation between 2006 and 2011⁹. Reducing fishing license prices was shown to positively influence participation, as did investment in programs to introduce people to fishing, and increase retention of those already fishing. Interestingly, there also appeared to be a correlation between the recent increase in fishing participation, and a decline in the number of new building permits issued. Basically, the economic downturn experienced during the Global Financial Crisis appeared to enable more tradies to spend their newfound free time fishing... Finally a silver lining! There also appeared to be a trend of more people searching for natural food sources, and choosing to harvest fish themselves for this purpose.

We can learn a few important lessons from this brief scan of trends in fishing participation and underpinning drivers around the world. Countries that have made a commitment to re-connect their communities with fishing show us that it's not too late. Programs



seeking to introduce or re-acquaint people with fishing, and improve the quality of fishing experiences available play a vital role in successfully building fishing participation. This augurs well for outcomes likely to be delivered from initiatives such as Victoria's 'Target One Million' program and South Australia's recently announced Recreational Fishing Grants Program. Also clear, is the need for continued investment in long-term monitoring to track what recreational fishers are catching, how often they are fishing, what they think of their fishing experiences, and what they do when they're not fishing. This will ensure that we continue to deliver fishing experiences that Australians desire, to keep them connected to our rivers and oceans, and the benefits that fishing provides. And maybe even return the television in its rightful place in the home: In the corner, and infrequently used.

- 1 Mcmanus, A., Hunt, W., Storey, J., White, J., 2011. Identifying the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing. Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, Final report for FRDC project 2011/217.
- 2 http://www.fecpl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Arlinghaus_Cooke_2009.pdf
- 3 http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stephen_Sutton2/publication/233288124_Why_Do_People_Drop_Out_of_Recreational_Fishing_A_Study_of_Lapsed_Fishers_from_Queensland_Australia/links/541c35f80cf203f155b36d4d.pdf
- 4 <http://recfishingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2013-Presentation-Social-Benefits-of-Fishing-Jacki-Schirmer.pdf>
- 5 http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/_assets/main/lib310665/no1_internet_use_social_networking_young_people.pdf
- 6 <https://www.pria.com.au/industrynews/13-million-australians-spend-18-hours-a-day-online>
- 7 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/fme.12075/abstract>
- 8 http://www.gofishbc.com/docs/default-source/economic-analysis/2013_bc_freshwater_sport_fishing_economic_impact_report.pdf?sfvrsn=2
- 9 http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/Hunt_Fish_Increase_Report.pdf



Getting hooked

...a brief guide to gearing up

BY MICHAEL FELSOVARY

Hooked on Bait & Tackle, Hoppers Crossing

Tackle shops can be a daunting place for beginners. With such a variety of rods and reels not to mention terminal tackle, where does one start? A couple of things that may help when out looking for gear is to identify what style of fishing you will be undertaking and where you are likely to be fishing. With that in mind, the following points may help.

General surf and rock fishing

Rods may be 12 to 13ft (2 or 3 pieces depending on travel restrictions), and depending on budget, may be glass or graphite and rated 6 to 10kg. There are many options in reels including your standard thread line reel, somewhere between the sizes of 6,000 to 10,000. And just to complicate things a little, there are also long cast models available which will make casting distances a lot easier. The other option available is the overhead reel which are a very good compact distance casting reel that makes handling big fish in the surf a pleasure. One thing to be aware of is that these reels are a lot harder to master, but once this is overcome, they are a joy to use. A good quality mono or braid line rated between 15 to 20lb will suit most.

General pier fishing

When fishing from piers or jetties, rods between 7 to 10ft which may be one or multiple pieces (depending on travel requirements) are suitable for most uses. Rods will be rated between 3 to 6kg, and in some cases, your surf rod may still be needed especially when trying to cast larger baits long distances. Reels will vary from a 2,500 up to an 8,000 sized reel depending on what rod you end up choosing and what species you are targeting. Line will vary greatly; on your lighter rod and reel combo 8lb will be ideal when targeting garfish, mullet and the like, right up to 20lb when targeting your larger snapper or if you are trying to lift larger fish up on to higher structures. Braid or mono line? This will come down to a personal preference.

General freshwater fishing

The type of gear required will vary greatly depending on what you are targeting. When targeting trout, redbfin and the like, fishing with light gear is required with outfits between 4 – 10lb. On the other end of the spectrum, when chasing Murray cod and Yellow belly much heavier gear is required with outfits between 12 to 20lb. Lengths of rods will vary depending on circumstances and will needed to be tailored for your needs.

There are some many styles and techniques so whatever your needs are, your local tackle shop will be able to help you with your gear selection. The more information you can provide on where you are going and what fish you are hoping to catch will in turn allow them to give you the best possible advice which will hopefully result in some memorable experiences.

Getting the kids geared up

The most important thing is to make sure fishing is fun and safe. Buy the best gear that you can afford. You get what you pay for at the end of the day and spending that little bit more up front will mean the gear will last longer. Teach kids to look after their rods and reels. Rinse them in fresh water after use and keep them in a dry place. Buy the kids a cheap tackle box. It teaches them to look after the bits and pieces and will foster a sense of ownership and responsibility. This is important and fits well with other sustainability ethics such as putting the little fish back to catch again another day.





Catching kids for fishing



BY PAUL CARTER

It was not all that long ago when as a young bloke I developed an interest in fishing. Although not that long ago a lot has changed in the way young people source information and what information is most easy to find.

For me, when I was learning to fish the information came from friends, neighbours and even Harry the fish and chip shop legend who all served a pivotal role in educating me about all things fishing and in some cases served me a hamburger and chips. Walking along a pier with my gear I fondly remember countless older fishers helping me along the way with tips and occasionally a few secrets that kept me coming back for more.

It was only 20 years ago when recreational fishing was considered a healthy, sustainable and acceptable form of outdoor activity or sport. I clearly remember that even the government would actively promote and advertise on television via the "Life Be in It" campaign that going fishing was a great healthy activity that could be enjoyed by all.

I may not have realised it back then but the days of standing in a fish and chip shop learning how to tie a uni knot or riding my bike up to our neighbour Peter's house so I could bust his chops about his rod building and fishing knowledge were to soon become a thing of the past for a new generation of young anglers.

I sometimes struggle to understand how the video age and now the online age of education for fishing has changed the ball game to the point of the education is no longer being offered by the book, the neighbour or the family member and is now being offered by anyone with a camera and an internet connection. Our schools no longer accept fishing as a healthy recreational or sustainable activity, our community pigeon hole anglers as a danger to the marine environment and at times our governments support the anti-fishing groups by offering grants and project funding to shut fishing down, in some



cases even giving them the tools to restrict our growth by limiting access to some waters with nothing more than a feel good proposal.

This is not about angler rights and has never been about angler rights; it's about how recreational fishing education has been taken from the anglers, and how the culture of fishing has been changed to the point that anglers actually offer support to the anti-fishing message making it harder to reach our next generation of anglers.

Some clear examples of how the culture of recreational fishing has changed have been from very close to home. Not so long ago my step daughter returned home from school telling me about how there were no fish left in the ocean because of fishing and that fishing was destroying Australia's oceans. This was backed up by the schools open policy to use internet search engines to research subjects, a quick look by anyone on any number of the available search engines will find the very same answer of no fish left from a wide number of environmental groups.

A quick jaunt around Google this afternoon offered a multitude of reasons as to why I should sell my boat and ditch all my fishing gear and take up golf instead. A quick school excursion to the zoo will have the keepers tell our kids how fishing is the biggest threat to marine animals in Port Phillip Bay, and worse still, recreational fishers funded part of the program. The biggest threat to the future of fishing is not the X-Box, the PlayStation and Facebook,

it's the reason that our next generation of anglers have been conditioned socially to look for alternatives to some of our past outdoor activities and further conditioned to believe that fishing is a bad thing, not as the great, healthy and sustainable activity we all know it to be.

Future proofing fishing is at a critical level, participation is down, tackle sales are down and general interest in fishing by our younger generation is almost at its lowest in history. There is no doubt that we have a problem with younger recruitment. With knowledge of this, what must we do to turn things around, how do we reengage

with our youth and how do we combat propaganda that is supported by our schools and government groups?

Currently we are fortunate enough to have a State Government in Victoria that is committed to increasing recreational fishing participation and has made a commitment to have one million recreational fishers in Victoria within four years. Now is our time to capitalise on the opportunities at hand and get cracking at getting more young folks holding rods and not PlayStation controllers or googling their weekends away.

..what must we do to turn things around, how do we reengage with our youth and how do we combat propaganda that is supported by our schools and government groups?

The last 10 years of my life fishing has been very good to me and has allowed me to travel on many occasions to countries that do not have the same problem we have as far as recruitment and growth. Most recently I travelled to the **Yokohama and Osaka Fishing Show** as I have done in the past five years. This year I chose to spend a great part of one of my days in the education arena at both shows and spoke with people involved in the programs that run at these events.

The one thing that stood out to me above all else is that a lot of time and work is spent on tradition and education. The traditional part is something that held the greatest influence of all as it maintained the culture of fishing and this is something that is not limited to the shows. The education process is a long-term program that has something for every angler in every age group, starting from infant to adult and there is no fishing exaggeration involved there either.

Continued...

Catching kids for fishing (continued)

I will go through the program step by step as it was explained to me in the hope we can all take something from it and find what will work for us here.

It starts with children aged two to four. Booths set up at the shows start with live bait companies bringing along a heap of baits both dead and alive for the kids to touch, feel and play with. This allows the young ones to see how the food chain starts. They may not be aware of it at their age, but it's all a part of them learning about what fishing is and knowing that it's a part of their life.

Once they get past the touchy feely stuff they move on to a blow up pool full of soft toys. They are given a rod to hold with a string and a large blunt hook attached, and with some guidance from mum, dad or a friend, they can fish themselves out a prize, learning that fishing is reward based; if they put in the time and try hard enough they will catch something they can take home, although not a fish, the reward for effort message is encapsulated in the prize.

Following up in a similar age bracket for kids aged from three to ten, children surround a pool filled with fish related objects floating around in water. With the use of a small dip net, children are given a sheet of paper with a list of objects that they are required to catch. The tanks contain many of some items and less of others to help kids to understand the importance of some fish over others. Again on completion they are offered a prize in return for their effort; in this case it was a small tackle tray keeping to the fishing motif.

As the age and interest increases the kids are moved on to actual fish. Various tanks are filled with goldfish and yabbies. Again, the kids are given a sheet of paper with the amount they are allowed to take. Kids are then taught not to take more than is on the sheet by instruction that there needs to be enough left for everyone to catch. The fishing conservation message is started, ensuring that all understand that just because the tank looks full many other will come and also want to catch their fish. In this case kids are encouraged to take their fish home live and keep them or they can put them back into the tank for someone else to catch. A very simple message but one that is important for young folks to embrace at an early age, learning that everyone should have the same right to catch the same fish and that taking fish home is an option, not a must.

As the young folks reach a secondary education age and level, the fishing education steps it up a notch. **While attending school all children as part of the curriculum are required to undergo a test about fishing.** In Japan, a licence is not required to go fishing but all who reside in the country and go fishing are required to complete a quiz about recreational fishing and species identification, along with various rules about recreational fishing. The schools embrace the culture of recreational fishing and play an important role in helping young people accept fishing as a part of everyday life and a healthy lifestyle choice. They receive a certificate showing that they are a competent fisherperson.

When attending one of the shows the kids all receive a show bag with a few minor fishing related products inside. A series of educational booths are set up where kids can attend and learn about knots, rods, reels, line, where to fish, what fish eat, where fish live and so on. For each booth they attend they receive a stamp on a card that shows they have completed each section and a prize for





attending each booth. For example, if they went to the knot tying booth they received a spool of line to practice knots with or to use when fishing, if they attend the “what fish eat” booth they are given a packet of dehydrated bait. The more booths they attend for a lesson will give them more reward and fishing related products are that reward. Once their card is filled with stamps they enter into a draw to win a more substantial prize drawn at the end of each day.

These booths are not just for kids, they are open to all members of the public so a fishing education can start at any age. It was great to see mums, dads and kids all sitting together learning how to tie a knot and moving to each booth learning something new as they went along. The last booth for the young folks is the Trout and Ayu ponds they have ponds filled with live, keep-sized fish.

Each young person is allocated a teacher who has a rod and bait. They are all taught how a fish bites, the feel of the bite and then the fight of the fish. Each young person is allowed to fish for a set time or until they catch one fish, so if they catch five fish in that time they can keep the five fish or release them. If they have not caught their fish in the set time they are allowed to stay at the pool until they do and again they are offered the option of keeping the fish or releasing it. If they decide to keep the fish they take their caught fish to a table at the end of the pool where they are taught how to properly dispatch or kill their catch. Once the fish has been killed properly they are shown how to care for the fish and are given a small cooler bag and the fish are placed on ice to take home to eat.

Generally the whole exercise for folks completing all the educational booths and the fish catching will take approximately 8 hours. The education does not stop with the age limit; once they are a bit above all the youth options there are many options open to older or more experienced fisho's.

These shows are attended by many manufacturers who all have pro staff present. There is an actual fishing school set up at the end of the education pavilion where a daily run down from various pro staff of various techniques are explained in more detail. This is an opportunity for the more experienced to learn something new or advance their skills from an expert. Outside of the education pavilion the rest of the tackle show is running. Most manufacturers also have stages set up around the show with various speakers explaining specialty techniques and advanced tips. Some manufacturers even have their own angler youth recruitment set up for young anglers which includes outside on water clinics, kids clubs and incentive for children to become more active with fishing. The big problem we

have getting a program like this to work in Australia is the industry choosing not to engage with the end user.

The media also plays a big role in education in Japan. It employs young people or well-known anglers to run kids programs on TV and online media taking advantage of the video age of our younger angling public. The media personalities are contractually obliged to spend a certain amount of time with young anglers at these shows and to encourage their growth in angling.

As the young folks reach a secondary education age and level, the fishing education steps it up a notch. While attending school all children as part of the curriculum are required to undergo a test about fishing.

I am not for one second claiming that this method or system is the silver bullet. Nor am I saying that it will solve all of our rec fishing participation or education needs. What I am saying is that in this case there is education. Let's take a good look around our state and see what education we have that can be measured, that is structured and that shows any promise of getting more people to participate in fishing. For any education program to work properly we need to have cooperation from various levels of government, education system and fishing peak bodies. The distributors and manufacturers need to have a want to engage with the end user, the angler. Currently, while we have none of this, not even a small part of any education will be successful.

Encouraged by what I have seen in Japan and other parts of the world, I am now heading to the United States in July with the intention of learning a bit about what they do and returning to Japan to spend some more time with organisers of education programs in the hope we can look to our future and protect our fishing for the future. If not us, who? If not now, when? As a father, an uncle and a friend of many young people, I hope to see something that will see recreational fishing prosper in the years ahead. What we do have is a flourishing fishery, reasonable access to fishing areas, funds from recreational licence money and many people who actively want to see fishing well into the future. It is now time for us all to sit down and get the future of fishing started.



Photo: Greg Snell

BY APRIL VOKEY

I always knew I'd split my year between two countries — I never figured that one of them would be Australia. Born and raised in British Columbia, Canadian winters and I have always paired as pleasantly as a wingless pigeon in an off-leash dog park. So, every year in November, I fled to warm water destinations in hopes of finding both sunshine and saltwater species.

In 2013, I'd been in the process of pricing out coastal homes in Roatan when I stumbled upon my (now) husband during a Norwegian fishing trip. His tan radiated beneath blue eyes, an Aussie accent lessening whatever appeal North American men may have had. "Australia, eh?" As quick as the local boys lost my attention, so too did the sketchy property deals in Honduras.

Romance aside, it was important that I explore Australia to see how it fared on a sport fishing scale. As a professional angler, the proximity to good fishing is about as important to me as high-rises are to the 'suits & ties'. I knew Australia was surrounded by water, but I'd heard few raving reviews about its fishing.

As a professional angler, the proximity to good fishing is about as important to me as high-rises are to the 'suits & ties'. I knew Australia was surrounded by water, but I'd heard few raving reviews about its fishing.

Upon arriving in Sydney, I wondered what I'd gotten myself into: pretty people in coffee shops, hurried people in cars, wet people with surf boards... and vacant looks on every single one of their faces when I asked them about Australia's fishing. Surely if fishing here were half decent, everybody would know about it? I chalked it up as a common big-city ailment and I took to the waters to see what I might find.

Heads turned and whispers drifted to me as I balanced on the bow of the boat trying to focus on casting my heavy clouser — I could hear the murmurs and feel the stares. Naturally I assumed it was my womanly exterior that was to blame for the attention, but my vanity quickly diminished upon realising that the stares came regardless of who was making the cast.

I began my exploration in the Sydney harbour, where sunsets warmed the skies and racing sailboats warmed my blood. “Catching anything?”, they’d holler smugly as they whizzed by.

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It seemed fishing, fly fishing in particular, was a sport with little familiarity amongst the majority of the NSW population. At my weekly casting sessions in the park, people were genuinely confused about what I was doing. To add to my bewilderment at their bewilderment, those who did know a thing or two about fly fishing merely assumed that I was a trout angler.

“No, no...”, I would start to explain. “You can fly fish for virtually any creature in the ocean!”

But too often I’d lost their attention before I could even begin to explain what species live in the deep blue — species at their finger tips, just waiting to be discovered.

It’s probably unfair to compare Australia’s angling participation to fishing in BC. In my town, fishing is a way of life — a culture, a lifestyle, a normality. Sure, perhaps downtown Vancouver may have just as many people unfamiliar with the great outdoors, but such folk are still aware of the fishing opportunities our waterways have to offer.

Fascinated by the lack of comprehension and awareness, I mentioned my confusion to several of my podcast guests (www.aprilvokey.com/podcasts) to hear their viewpoints on the matter. As none of them have ever lived in North America, it was impossible to agree upon the differences or similarities between the two continents.

Nonetheless, I held fast on my belief that fishing in Australia is underrated, with the potential to grow as one of the most sought out fishing destinations in the world.

New Zealand was on everyone’s bucket list, why wasn’t Australia?

The more I probed the topic, the more grey it seemed to turn. As I travelled the country, I realised that certain states have more participation than others — regardless of the fishery’s quality. How did some regions have such pride in the sport, whereas others (who often have even better fishing) seemed so disinterested?

What’s more, when I spoke with avid anglers who I met in NSW, VIC and TAS, many of them had never ventured outside of their own state.

Canada is famous for its vast terrain, and domestic travel to reach remote fisheries isn’t uncommon. Why were so few people making the trek to explore the incredible places here?

It’s not an answer I plan to stumble upon anytime soon, but I’m working on it.

Continued...



My first kingfish in Sydney Harbour.



Sharlin learning to fish soft plastics.



What are the chances that just down the street lives a childhood friend of mine!? She was ecstatic to learn how to fish when she moved here, but she didn't know who to turn to.



Using rhea feathers (a popular steelhead fly material) for the Australian bass.



A gorgeous fly caught estuary perch with my fellow Canadian fishing buddy, Colby.

In NSW, the kingfish proceeded to toy with my sanity and it didn't take long for tales of world famous marlin to ignite my determination. From the harbour, to Port Stephens, to our place up the coast, we chased and pursued the renowned billfish.

A spurt of good weather and accommodating tides befriended us and it seemed like every spare moment I had was spent searching for marlin. As was to be expected, the conditions didn't last and storms soon rolled in.

Just as I had begun to think that such weather dependency was the reason for the perceived shortage of anglers, bass fishing, rock fishing, river fishing and beach fishing revealed themselves to me as various alternatives.

There was almost always something in season to fish for! Maybe there were so many fisheries to choose from, that anglers were simply spread out and the concentration was diluted!? Then I looked at the license numbers...

I won't pretend to know anything about Australian fisheries and I would be foolish to say that I have even partially grasped any sort of comprehension about the industry here.

Population, economy, government, history... all of these things make up what has been, and what will be, the future of Australia's recreational sport-fishing.

What I am hoping for, however, is to meet as many of you as possible during my stay in Oz — and to learn that my observations are incorrect. Maybe the mindset here is still that fewer anglers equate to less pressure and that promoting the sport is a bad idea, or perhaps it's that I'm just setting the bar too high. I've always been a strong believer that there's power in numbers, and that many of the current molestations of Mother Nature might be avoided if there were enough like-minded people to team up and take a stance.

Or perhaps there are more anglers out there than I think there are, but they're all on some secret hotspot somewhere and I just haven't had the good fortune to find them yet — I'm hoping that's the case.

Marlin fishing requires big gear and a little faith.



Tailgating with Simone Hackett in Tassie and chatting about how to grow the sport.



And making time for a little fun.

Take the plunge into bluewater fishing

As a keen fisherman growing up, I had always dreamt of catching big game fish. Thoughts of line burning tuna and spectacular jumps from a marlin would keep me awake at night. Big game fishing is often viewed as the pinnacle of sport fishing by many, and had once been considered the exclusive domain of the wealthy and the elite. Advances in technology over the years has made such a difference to the sport. With the modern day sonar and GPS chart plotters making navigation safer and easier, newer 2 stroke and 4 stroke engine technology has more than halved our fuel bills and given us added range, tackling large pelagic species further offshore well within reach of the average trailer boat these days.

How to get started? The abundance of information available online is immense and easily accessible but sifting through it to find relevant and useful information can be daunting. Varying methods will be spruiked by many as the only way to target fish or "this worked for me once" is now the only way to do it. While some tactics work well for some they may not suit everyone's taste or ability. People starting out in our sport are best to keep it simple. Start with the basics and build up from there, if a technique sounds hard and complex it most probably is. As your confidence and understanding of species and locations increases, you will fine tune techniques and develop your own practices.

The best piece of advice for anyone wanting to try their hand at game fishing is it find like-minded people that have done it before...

The best piece of advice for anyone wanting to try their hand at game fishing is it find like-minded people that have done it before and there is no better place to do this than with a GFAV affiliated club. Joining a game fishing club is perfect for this as wealth of knowledge found in these clubs is priceless. The importance of getting set up correctly can not only make you a better angler sooner but could save you a lot of money.

Don't forget, even the most experienced fisher was a beginner once and has taken many years to get the level of knowledge they currently possess. Even more incentive for those that want to try game fishing but don't have a boat or a boat suitable for travelling offshore is the chance of jumping on someone else's vessel and giving it a go. This is also a good way to experience a variety of boats in different conditions if you are looking at buying a boat or upgrading. Also worthwhile taking note of is how others set their boat up, outriggers, rod holder even burley pots set ups etc. vary greatly from boat to boat. See what works well for you and go for it.

Another benefit if joining an affiliated club is having the ability to tag fish. While catch and release fishing is growing in popularity, being able to place a tag in a fish has the added benefit of supporting scientific research. The benefits of this as well are the recognition that comes from our state and national association. Many clubs members compete through the season for trophies based on tag and release points accumulated and capture recognition. Responsible fishing at its finest

A full list of current clubs is available through GFAV website at <http://www.gfav.com.au>. Here you will also find a list of target species for capture and tag and release. Becoming a member also gives you a chance at being recognised for capture records for the



club, state, national and even world records! While many unofficial records exist, they always seem open to speculation. Only the official records will be remembered as part of history.

When considering if a club is right for you it's worth looking at more than its proximity to your home. If a particular species or location seems more appealing, it would be worthwhile investigating what the club can offer on advice based on favourite target species. Some clubs seem a bit more "biased" towards certain species while others try and tackle the whole list!

So if challenging yourself to take the plunge into the world of offshore fishing, tackling the giants of the deep and the comradery of an affiliated club members sounds good then check out an affiliated GFAV club and get on board! It will be a rewarding experience.



Your fishing
licence fees
at work

Working together for fish habitat, fisheries and fishing

BY RENAE AYRES

Arthur Rylah Institute

Recreational fishers are a hugely diverse bunch. Past surveys of recreational fishers in Victoria and Australia-wide indicate that we differ in: where we fish; how often we fish; why we fish; our age, gender and experience; whether we belong to a fishing club . . . the list goes on. What we have in common is that: we enjoy fishing; we want healthy, sustainable fisheries and great fishing into the future; and, we understand healthy fish habitats are fundamental for fish (and fishing).

More and more frequently, recreational fishers are advocating for fish habitat and working together with other stakeholders to protect or rehabilitate fish habitat. In implementing the Victorian Government's Target One Million policy, Fisheries Victoria will continue to work closely with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Catchment Management Authorities and recreational fishers to improve habitat outcomes for fish.

There are various ways to be involved in improving fish habitat, from writing letters to support a project, to actively helping with on-ground activities. The first step is to speak up; tell other people what's important to you for maintaining and improving fish habitat, fisheries and fishing. Discuss and share your concerns and ideas with other fishers, your local recreational fishing club, local community groups, VRFish members and government agencies who share a common interest or goal. Allies and partnerships could be the key to developing your idea and the success of your project.

Are you concerned about local areas you think need habitat improvement? Brainstorm with your allies what activities might improve the site for fish. For example, if your local fishing spot has a bare eroded bank, you might have noticed, over time, that the eroded silt is filling in a deep pool that once offered refuge for fish and good fishing. Actions such as replanting native vegetation, installing timber or rock, or fencing off stock would help stabilise the bank and improve water quality. Find out whether a project is already happening to address the issue and join in; otherwise consider proposing and planning a project with appropriate stakeholders. Your chances of getting support will be dramatically improved if you have thought clearly about some key questions. Discuss with others:

What do you want to do and why? How will it help fish? What permits, approvals, funding and resources are needed? Who will be involved and what are their roles and responsibilities in the project? What are the timeframes for tasks? How will you track progress and measure success?

Are you concerned about local areas you think need habitat improvement? Brainstorm with your allies what activities might improve the site for fish ... Find out whether a project is already happening to address the issue and join in; otherwise consider proposing and planning a project with appropriate stakeholders.

The Demonstration Reach Toolbox (<http://bit.ly/1HyP2JO>) is a resource that may help with your planning. Project planning is useful for seeking funding, implementing your project and promoting your achievements. It may sound daunting, but your allies can help, and once the project is underway, it will become clear that you have created some real benefits for fish and fishing in the future. You will also inspire others to get involved or embark on their own project. Other activities you can do to support fish habitat include:

- Participating in meetings, forums, field days and events. Demonstrate your interest, learn, and share information. Opportunities include recreational fishing club presentations, Fisheries Victoria's Regional Recreational Fishing Forums, Catchment Management Authority community days, Coastal Fish Habitat Hotspot project activities and quarterly VRFish State Council meetings.
- Passing on your knowledge to others (including younger people) about the importance of fish habitat and responsible fishing etiquette. Educational services and programs provided by Fishcare Victoria Inc. are a great example and resource, and foster looking after our fisheries.
- Contributing to research and citizen science. For example, you can monitor water quality in your local waterway through Waterwatch or Estuarywatch, keep angling records, and join projects like Nature Glenelg Trust's Mulloway Research Angler Program.

If you would like more information, please contact Renae Ayres at the Arthur Rylah Institute on (03) 9450 8600 or visit <http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/arthur-rylah-institute>

The future depends on what you do today.

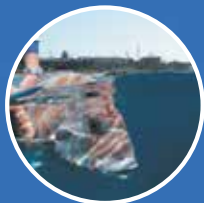


Above: Recreational fishers learning about methods to survey fish in different habitats at the Merri Estuary, Warrnambool. (Photo: Renae Ayres)

Below: The Victorian Government, using Recreational Fishing Licence Fees, have supported many fish habitat improvement projects, including installing wood into Broken River. (Photo: Jim Castles, Goulburn Broken CMA)



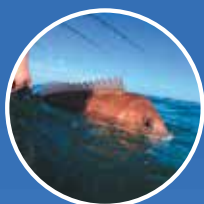
Help released snapper survive



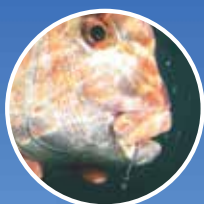
Fish shallow water
to avoid barotrauma



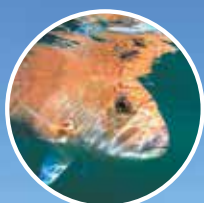
Leave snapper in the
water for release



Minimise handling
and netting



Use circle hooks
or lures



Release snapper
quickly

Snapper fishers
can help the survival
of released snapper
by following these
key points.

For further information
on these points go to
www.vrfish.com.au/snappersurvival

Representing
Victorian
Recreational
Fishers



This project was funded by the Victorian
Government using Recreational Fishing Licence fees



VRFISH MEMBER PROFILE:

Representing
Victorian
Recreational
Fishers



I was introduced to fishing by my father at the age of five and from there on I have never looked back.

The passion and enthusiasm I have for fishing resonates with everything I do and has become a major part of my lifestyle, to the extent that I managed to incorporate some fishing time into my honeymoon whilst in New Zealand.

I am known to spend many hours at my local tackle store, spending time enquiring about the latest products and discussing the art of angling to increase my knowledge base and fuel my interest.

In terms of the type of fishing I prefer, a question I have been asked on many occasions, but one I cannot answer, simply because I don't focus on one sole species or on one specific aspect of fishing. From freshwater to offshore, spotlighting flounder, lure casting and fly fishing, I love chasing anything and everything and appreciate the opportunity to try new methods I have never encountered before.

Fishing is not only about "the catch" but also the many tangible aspects such as the friendships I have made along the way and the laughs and banter that comes with these friendships, all whilst being out in this great land.

Apart from the pure art of angling, I am keen to learn about the scientific concepts behind our recreational fisheries and am fortunate to be surrounded by many fishery scientists as well as anglers involved in fishing policy. Over the past few years, discussions with these contact groups have developed my awareness from a scientific perspective and cemented my belief in "fishing for the future".

Fishing is not only about "the catch" but also the many tangible aspects such as the friendships I have made along the way and the laughs and banter that comes with these friendships, all whilst being out in this great land.

The future holds many challenges ahead with our forever changing environment, habitat and weather patterns. I feel we need to educate the young to prosper a better future and sustain premium fisheries.

I hope that my passion and enthusiasm inspires many others to at least try this great sport of ours and I hope that my contribution to VRFish enables me to learn as well as share my joy and passion with other anglers.



Fishing in Victoria – something for everyone

Victorian fishers are a blessed lot – the fisheries across the State provide ample opportunities to ply your skill and feed your family.

Over 721,000 Victorians share a passion for recreational fishing, and there are fishing clubs scattered all over the State catering to fishers whether they be hooked on feeding 'old man' cod or like to chase the big reds as they come into our bays to spawn.

There are many reasons a large segment of VRFish members belong to fishing clubs:

- > Fishing clubs give fishers access to a fantastic group of people who love to talk about fishing as much as they do.
- > They give a sense of contributing to the local community.
- > Club membership provides an opportunity to participate in social and competitive events.
- > They give the ability to improve fishing by learning from more experienced fishers or to share your own knowledge.
- > Club membership also provides a means to contribute to the political landscape of fishing, and have your say in issues that affect you and your favourite fisheries.

Contact one of our member clubs below for more information:

Albert Park Yachting & Angling Clubs Association

Contact: Patrick Hutchinson
Phone: 03 9329 8200
Email: info@apyac.org.au
Web: apyac.org.au

Association of Geelong & District Angling Clubs

Contact: John Hotchin
Phone: 03 52486817
Email: jhotchin@bigpond.net.au
Web: fishinggeelong.com

Australian Anglers Association (VIC)

Contact: Tim Hose
Phone: 0428 521 449
Web: aaavic.org

Australian National Sportfishing Association (VIC)

Contact: Darren Wloch
Phone: 0414 383 477
Email: dwloch@borcor.com.au
Web: ansavic.com.au

Ballarat & District Anglers Association

Contact: Geoff Cramer
Phone: 0418 320 139
Email: gcramer@chw.net.au

Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron

Contact: Brian Wright
Phone: 0421 764 370
Email: bwgarden@optusnet.com.au
Web: bmys.com.au

Boating Victoria

Contact: Wallace Nicholson
Phone: 03 9585 1330
Email: boating@yachtingvictoria.com.au
Web: boatingvictoria.com.au

Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs

Contact: Doug Braham
Phone: 03 5174 4606
Email: ddbraham@bigpond.com

Fishcare Victoria

Contact: Dave Cleeland
Phone: 0468 300 588
Email: dcleeland@fishcarevictoria.org.au
Web: fishcare.org.au

Game Fishing Association of Victoria

Contact: Geoff Fisher
Phone: 0412 005 850
Email: secretary@gfav.com.au
Web: gfav.com.au

Gippsland Angling Clubs Association

Contact: Robert Caune
Phone: 03 5155 1505
Email: robert@net-tech.com.au

Goulburn Valley Association of Angling Clubs

Contact: Wally Cubbin
Phone: 0428 942 744
Email: wcubbin@bigpond.net.au

Howqua Angling Clubs Fish Protection Association

Contact: Steven Relf
Phone: 0417 553 249
Email: srelf@optusnet.com.au

Metropolitan Anglers Association

Contact: William Richards
Phone: 03 9337 5113
Email: fishomaa@hotmail.com

Midland & North Central Angling Association

Contact: Greg Hellsten
Phone: 0401 984 323
Email: gregh.ogp@hotmail.com

Mid Northern Association of Angling Clubs

Contact: Alan Digby
Phone: 03 5492 2822
Email: alasue@hotmail.com

Native Fish Australia

Contact: Tim Curmi
Phone: 0417 419 765
Email: timbo42b@yahoo.com.au
Web: nativefish.asn.au

North East Angling Association

Contact: Stafford Simpson
Phone: 0419 564 319
Email: vk2ast@tpg.com.au

Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria

Contact: Priya Cardinaletti
Phone: 0414 310 727
Email: priya@sdfv.org.au
Web: sdfv.org.au

South Gippsland Angling Clubs Association

Contact: Allister Dowling
Phone: 0429 001 984
Email: Jodie_dowling@bigpond.com

South West District

Association of Angling Clubs
Contact: Gary Cronin
Phone: 0417 125 127
Email: gbear@hotmail.com

Southern Freedivers

Contact: Clint Engel
Phone: 0409 613 804
Email: info@brimbosports.com
Web: southernfreedivers.org.au

Torquay Angling Club

Contact: Paul Rebbechi
Phone: 0423 209 563
Email: prebbech@gmail.com
Web: www.torquayfish.com.au

Victorian Fishing Charters Association

Contact: John Willis
Phone: 0407 053 484
Email: john@beachmarine.com.au

Victorian Piscatorial Council

Contact: Peter Milley
Phone: 0419 537 082
Email: pmilley@bigpond.net.au

Wimmera Anglers Association

Contact: Barry Williams
Phone: 0402 352 006
Email: barry3422@bigpond.net.au

give your children
memories to cherish

replace iPads
with fishing rods



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