



Media Release

FROM THE OFFICE OF VRFISH - VICTORIA'S
RECREATIONAL FISHING PEAK BODY

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SAVE OUR GIPPSLAND LAKES FISHERY

VRFish, the peak body representing Victorian recreational fishers, is calling on all political parties to commit to a comprehensive fish recovery plan to save the iconic Gippsland Lakes Fishery.

VRFish Chairman, Mr. Rob Loats, said "The Gippsland Lakes Fishery has reached a crisis point and can no longer support both a quality recreational fishery and a productive commercial fishery."

"It's abundantly clear immediate reforms are warranted to recover what was arguably one of Victoria's most highly valued recreational fishing destinations".

VRFish is calling for a fair and respectful compulsory buy-out of the commercial Gippsland Lakes net fishery, a review of recreational fishing management arrangements, habitat restoration and restocking programs.

A meagre 13 tonne of black bream was reported in commercial catch figures last year making it the lowest catch on record, an alarming trend compared to the record catch of 446 tonnes in 1983/84.

"Our recreational fishers have been observing an ongoing decline in fishing over many years, yet their concerns continue to fall on deaf ears."

Local recreational fishers emphatically oppose the continuation of indiscriminate nets that continue to impact their vision to recover black bream, dusky flathead, estuary perch and Australian bass stocks.

"The local economy and tourism industry are reliant on recreational fishing and every day wasted not getting on with the job of improving the quality of fishing is another day caravan parks, petrol stations, pubs and tackle stores are missing out on business."

An economic report commissioned by VRFish, noted recreational fishing is worth an estimated \$381 million to the wider Gippsland Region and supports 2,422 jobs.

"Our fishers understand the lakes recreational fishery is in jeopardy and we have been overwhelmed with support to voluntarily cut bag limits, increase size limits and get involved with habitat restoration."

This once again demonstrates the value of having a strong and independent Recreational Fishing Peak Body in Victoria who is planning for the future success of fishing and sustainability of our estuarine fisheries.



Media Contact:

(03) 5221 1104 info@vrfish.com.au

PO Box 4574 GEELONG VIC 3220
t: (03) 5221 1104 e: info@vrfish.com.au w: www.vrfish.com.au
ABN 47 068 111 624

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