



# Media Release

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

**5 February 2019**

## **BAY AND ESTUARY FISHERY REFORMS ESSENTIAL**

***VRFish, the peak body representing Victoria's 838,000 recreational fishers, is reiterating its full support for the Andrew's Governments Target One Million plan to phase out commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay and Gippsland Lakes.***

***VRFish Chairman, Mr Rob Loats, said "Commercial net fishing in coastal bays and estuaries has been a longstanding concern with recreational fishers for decades."***

***"Our anglers cannot compete with the setting of hundreds of metres of nets in fish nursery areas, with no set quotas," he said.***

***Since the buy-back of Port Phillip Bay netting licences commenced recreational fishers are already seeing the Bay's fish stocks bounce back to life, including record recruitment of snapper and strong recruitment of King George whiting.***

***"Indiscriminate gill-netting and dragging nets over sensitive fish habitat isn't the way to manage these bay and estuarine fisheries and to deliver a quality fishing experience for thousands of recreational fishers," he said.***

***Recreational fishing in Victoria is valued at \$2.3 billion to the State economy and provides hundreds of jobs and invaluable social benefit. The direct expenditure from recreational fishing in Port Phillip Bay alone is worth more than \$230 million annually.***

***"The Gippsland Lakes Fishery is in crisis with declining fish numbers over the last 30 years with the lowest ever recorded commercial catch of black bream of just 13 tonnes – a staggering 97% reduction from the historical high of 484 tonnes in 1984/85," he said.***

***"We advocated very strongly during the State Election that the only option is to manage Gippsland Lakes as a net-free area as our sector can deliver significantly more economic and social benefits to the Victorian community, while leaving more fish in the water to help recover the fishery," he said.***



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**Over the last 20 years, commercial netting across Victorian bays and inlets has been phased out in places such as Mallacoota, Lake Tyers, Tamboon Inlet, Shallow Inlet, Anderson Inlet, Sydenham Inlet and Western Port delivering a boost to fish stocks and quality of recreational fishing.**

**Responding to claims by Seafood Industry Australia that these reforms are depriving Victorian consumers of seafood, Mr. Loats said "The hard reality is the Port Phillip Bay and Gippsland Lakes net fishery only supplies around 1.2% of seafood consumed in Victoria," he said.**



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