

Dallas D'Silva
Director, Fisheries Management, Policy, Science and Licensing
By email: dallas.dsilva@vfa.vic.gov.au

Dear Dallas,

REVIEW OF THE FISHERIES REGULATIONS 2009

Firstly, thank you for providing VRFish the opportunity at this preliminary stage in order to flag for review priority areas of the Fisheries Regulations 2009 ("the Regulations").

In attempting to gather and consolidate input around key priorities for review, VRFish has consulted a broad range of stakeholders from individual fishers to fishing groups and associations and key interest groups.

What has been confirmed through undertaking this early consultation is the level of importance and high priority that recreational fishers place on the review of the Regulations. Recreational fishers are passionate about their resource and continue to demonstrate a strong conservation ethic that evolves with social norms.

It must be pointed out that recreational fisheries management is underpinned by voluntary compliance and an acceptance of a 'fish for the future' philosophy. Therefore, involvement of recreational fishers in the co-design and genuine discussion is critically essential. This will ensure the remaking of the regulations is fit-for-purpose for the next ten years and also achieves the objective of simplification and reducing regulatory burden. Moreover, recreational fishers will have a greater understanding and acceptance of regulations.

What has been further unveiled is a diverse range of areas and issues within the Regulations requiring review. The following points provide an overview of these areas and issues for review:

1. Licencing

It has been suggested that a review of recreational licence classes along with the current system of exemptions requires review.

2. Review of catch and size limits

Fishers overwhelming have conveyed the need for a comprehensive review of catch and size limits for all species. This includes the need to undertake a review to ensure that catch and size limits are

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better, for everyone.***

evidence-based and reflect the most recent science alongside societal expectations and norms for what constitutes a fair and reasonable catch.

3. Review of fishing equipment, methods and practices

Suggestions have been made that current restrictions on fishing gear (such as electric reels and gaffs, for example), along with fishing methods and practices (such as removing the restriction of tagging fish), require review to bring them in line with the evolving expectations of the recreational fishing community and broader societal values.

4. Regulation and management of the charter industry

The charter industry is a very important component of our sector but is largely unregulated. There have been calls made for the need to revise management arrangements, or that lack thereof, of the recreational fishing charter industry. This includes suggestions for introduction of licencing of charter operations and a system for monitoring and reporting which would contribute to better management decisions and optimising the industry.

5. Strategic consultation

What has become evident through this initial consultation phase is the need for a strategic and structured consultation framework.

In order to ensure the best possible outputs from the review that both meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders and regulator, along with regulations that are fit-for-purpose and reduce regulatory burden, a number of key actions are suggested:

- Ensuring a transparent and open process with public information provided around timeframes, process and opportunities for input;
- Formation of a steering committee or working group which includes key stakeholders; and
- Options and discussion paper prior to development and release of the Regulatory Impact Statement.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss or clarify further our submission.

VRFish is committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes from the review and looks forward to working with the VFA and Government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Loats', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rob Loats
Chair
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

7 February 2019