

Julia Menzies - Chair
Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable (SRFR)

INVITATION TO COMMENT ON THE DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE – RFL REVIEW

Dear Julia,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft terms of reference (TOR) of the recently announced RFL review.

We applaud the Minister for Fishing and Boating, the Hon. Jaala Pulford's decision to task the Victorian Fisheries Authority with undertaking this important assignment following our letter to her, requesting an independent review to modernise the Recreational Fishing Licence System and Trust Account.

It must be noted however, that as the key instigator of this review, VRFish is disappointed at the timeframe provided to us to submit comments on these terms of reference. A two-week deadline is insufficient time for us to facilitate proper consultation with our board, our staff, and our wider membership. Thorough consultation is a vital process in ensuring the terms of reference cover off all of the essential elements of the review, which will help shape and modernise the RFL system for years to come.

Given this inadequate timeframe for us to properly consult with our stakeholders, VRFish can only recommend the following amendments to the draft TOR:

9. *The VFA, in consultation with VRFish, and the Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable, will contract an independent consultant with appropriate expertise to lead the review.*

VRFish believes that in order for the review to be fully independent and transparent, the consultant must be contracted in consultation with VRFish, and the SRFR. The appointment must be approved by VRFish, and the SRFR members prior to a contract being awarded.

11. *The review will consult the RFL Working Group members, Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable, VRFish and the Department of Transport.*

As the peak body representing all recreational fishers in Victoria, and the primary instigator of this review, VRFish must be recognised as a key stakeholder outside of the SRFR that will directly consult with the appointed consultant.

**Let's make fishing
better, for everyone.**

12. The review will have regard to the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account (RFLTA) funds, the current grant structure, and how they can be optimised for the purpose of recreational fishing both now, and into the future.

By issuing grants, the RFLTA should take into account the desired outcomes and priorities, including building capacity of our sector. Currently, the Recreational Fishing Grants Program is a competitive grants process with a broad assessment criteria. A viable grants structure that is applicable to the strategic future visions of all stakeholders must be investigated.

15. The review will examine the appropriate model for the application and distribution of RFLTA funds for projects that directly improve recreational fishing in Victoria.

The structure of grant applications, and the criteria for distribution of funds has been under scrutiny for some time. A review will provide accountability to RFL holders by ensuring our funds are reinvested towards strategic and priority outcomes for our sector.

16. The review will consider the costs and benefits of expanding the categories of the RFL and clearly define who shall be required to hold a licence.

A modernised RFL system should be designed that encapsulates all recreational fishing participants. The review must consider the most appropriate fee structure that enables the revenue base of the RFL Trust Account to increase with increasing participation in recreational fishing. The revenue received must meet the costs associated with improving recreational fishing.

18. The review will consider other relevant matters raised by stakeholders.

Any relevant matters raised by stakeholders during facilitated meetings must be formally noted in minutes and taken into consideration during the review.

19. The review will commence in June, starting with the meeting of the SRFR set to be held on Friday 28th June 2019. Submissions from stakeholder groups may be provided to the consultant in July – to mid-September, with key stakeholders also having the opportunity to convene directly with the consultant during this period.

Face to face meetings with the appointed consultant is a critical element in ensuring a proper consultation process occurs. VRFish suggests the VFA seek out key stakeholders who wish to facilitate a meeting with the consultant and include this into the work scope of the contract.

20. A draft report will be tabled by the consultant at a meeting of the SRFR, with key stakeholders given the opportunity to comment prior to release of the final report.

This is crucial part of the process to ensure that key stakeholder's submissions have been thoroughly assessed and considered throughout the consultation period.

22. If required, key stakeholders can formally request an extension to deadlines within this term of reference to the VFA, to ensure adequate consultation occurs.

Since 2001, the RFL and operation of the Trust Account has not been independently reviewed to ensure it is meeting our sector's requirements. A comprehensive examination of the RFL system involves consultation with numerous stakeholders. VRFish strongly endorses a thorough and independent process, unimpeded by short deadlines.

We look forward to working closely with the VFA, the SRFR and other key stakeholders in transforming our current Recreational Fishing Licence System and Trust Account into a modernised and re-invigorated system that will address our sector's future challenges and priorities.

Kind regards,

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

Rob Loats
Chairman
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

09 July 2019