

Jaala Pulford
Minister for Fishing and Boating
Level 20, 1 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
By email: jaala.pulford@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Jaala,

URGENT REVIEW FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AT CORNER INLET

I am writing to you to inform you of a need to review the management arrangements of the Corner Inlet Fishery.

We have been fielding serious concerns by many recreational fishers who have observed a rapid decline in the quality of recreational fishing in Corner Inlet. They fear this activity will damage the future sustainability of fish stocks in the area and lead to a decline in recreational fishers choosing to visit Corner Inlet.

This observed change we believe has coincided with a change in commercial fishing activity at Corner Inlet. Feedback from our recreational fishers have been consistent and has been derived from many different sources. What has been reported is:

- intensive commercial fishing activity and observed catches above what would be considered normal activity
- commercial fishing areas close to shore/port which are frequented by recreational fishers and are generally not fished by commercial fishers
- low catches of King George whiting, particularly in the Port Albert area

We have asked the Victorian Fisheries Authority to publish the latest commercial catch data and perform analysis to determine if there has been a change in fishing behaviour and effort when compared to historical data. Likewise, we have asked the VFA to present the recreational fishing catch, effort and satisfaction rate data collected by creel surveys funded by RFL funds.

The existing commercial fishing management tools of limited entry licenses and gear-based limits are ineffective to cap individual operator catch and effort. The Corner Inlet Fishery is not managed under a Fisheries Management Plan. We understand that a fishery management plan was intended to be developed from late 2016.

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

While VRFish has a clear policy position on commercial netting in bays and estuaries, further consideration must also be given to a formal fishery management plan. Such a plan specifies performance indicators and targets of the fishery, including required monitoring.

The current situation has illustrated that recreational fishing objectives are not being adequately managed for under the existing management arrangements.

We propose VRFish, Seafood Industry Victoria and the Victorian Fisheries Authority meet immediately to discuss options for the most appropriate management of the Corner Inlet fishery in the short term. This should include legislative options.

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

26 August 2019