

Hon David Littleproud MP
Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency
Management
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By email: David.Littleproud.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister,

INTERVALLEY WATER TRANSFERS - LOWER GOULBURN RIVER

VRFish, the peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria, is writing to you to request your intervention to halt Inter Valley water Transfers (IVTs) from the lower Goulburn River during summer months. Recreational fishers are angry unprecedented levels of IVTs is ruining our recreational fishery and damaging our river ecosystem that our native fish rely upon.

Recreational fishing in Victoria is worth \$7.1 billion in both direct and indirect economic value with 838,000 people participating. Nearly a third of all inland recreational fishing in Victoria occurs in the Goulburn River catchment. Recreational fishers, catchment managers and fisheries managers have spent decades investing in improving native fish populations in the lower Goulburn River and creating arguably the best inland fishing opportunities in Victoria. IVTs is placing all this hard work and investment at risk.

The impact to our recreational fishery from IVTs is through unseasonably high-water flows and coldwater pollution. This plays havoc with our native fish natural time clock impacting growth, survival, recruitment success and catchability. Over summer in normal conditions, water temperatures rise which get the fish on the bite as they are right in the middle of their growing season. Juvenile fish born over the spring need calm, warm and productive waters - not a fast flowing, cold river.

IVTs are causing erosion of the lower bank and the loss of trees and vegetation that stabilise the riverbanks. The loss of fish habitat and increased erosion means a muddier river and higher rates of siltation of deep refuge pools. This damage to the critical river habitat will have significant ramifications for the health and abundance of our native fish now and in the long-term.

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

Unprecedented levels of IVTs being released down the Goulburn River is to service water users downstream on the Murray River and in South Australia. Prior to 2017, water demands being fulfilled by these IVTs would have been largely serviced from the Darling or Murrumbidgee systems, however, little or no water is available. In our view, exacerbating the problem is large organisations monopolising the water market and further horticultural development in the lower Murray River are all creating more demands for water away from the available water sources which is unsustainable.

No longer can recreational fishers stand by and accept the lower Goulburn River being used as a water pipe. The Australian Government must prevent environmental damage on the lower Goulburn River and demonstrate a genuine commitment to native fish recovery in the Basin by halting IVTs in the lower Goulburn River over the months of summer.

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

14 January 2020

Cc: Hon. Lisa Neville MP, Minister for Water
Hon. Damian Drum MP, Federal Member for Nichols
Hon. Suzanna Sheed MP, State Member for Shepparton District