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**CHANGES TO THE GOULBURN TO MURRAY TRADE SUBMISSION**

Dear Phoebe,

Unprecedented levels of summer inter-valley water trade (IVT) flows are profoundly impacting our valuable recreational fisheries and the river ecosystems that support them. This amounts to environmental vandalism and it must stop.

**COLD WATER FLOWS ARE DAMAGING OUR NATIVE FISHERIES**

Unseasonably high-water flows and cold water are playing havoc with the ecological triggers our native fish rely on, significantly impacting growth, survival, recruitment success and catchability.

Under normal summer flow conditions, rising water temperatures stimulate fish to bite as they are in the peak of their growing season. Juvenile fish born over the Spring need calm, warm and productive waters - not a fast flowing, cold river. Research data from the Arthur Rylah Institute supports this with findings that 30% of young of year Murray cod lost during these high IVTs flows.

**IVTs ARE DRAINING THE LIFE OUT OF OUR FISHING**

High water levels and fast flowing, cold waters as a result of IVTs are destroying our native fisheries and the quality of our fishing experiences in the lower Goulburn over summer. This is our peak fishing period, the time when local tackle and other businesses and regional tourism relies for their very livelihood and survival.

**RECREATIONAL FISHING IS A $7.1 BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY**

Recreational fishing provides enormous economic and social values in Victoria and as a sector we must be appropriately recognised in water management decisions. 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 according to research conducted by VRFish in 2019.

**FISH HABITAT BEING WASHED AWAY**

Recreational fishers have been working together with resource managers for decades to repair damage done to our waterways and rebuild our native fish populations. IVTs are undoing all the work and investment that has gone into creating some of the best inland fishing opportunities in Victoria.

Unsustainable levels of IVT are causing erosion of the lower bank and the loss of littoral vegetation that stabilises the riverbank and provides critical habitat for native fish. These impacts have led to unacceptably high levels of turbidity and higher rates of siltation of critical refuge pools. As fishers, we are observing first-hand the damage being done to critical river habitat which we believe will have significant ramifications for the health and abundance of our native fish now and in the long-term.

**NATURAL FLOW REGIMES DEMANDED**

In order to prevent the damage done to our river ecosystems and the fish populations that rely on them, it is imperative that high summer IVTs cease and natural flow regimes be restored. Presently, none of the options achieve this nor prevent further damage to the environment, and as a community of concerned fishers with a legitimate stake in the long-term health and future of our rivers, fish populations and indeed our regional communities, we demand further consideration and examination of IVT options.

Yours sincerely,

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