

The Hon. Daniel Andrews
Victorian Premier
By email: daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

EASING RESTRICTIONS FOR FISHING AND BOATING IN VICTORIA

Dear Premier,

As the peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria, VRFish has been receiving extensive and ongoing feedback from fishers to the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our response to this feedback has been to encourage fishers to play their role, stop the spread and save lives.

The success in 'flattening the curve' and the restricting the spread of Covid-19 have provided a privileged opportunity to re-evaluate and ease current Covid-19 restrictions that were introduced as of March 31.

We appeal to you to immediately ease fishing and boating restrictions in Victoria.

As you are aware, the endorsed *National Principles of Sport and Recreation Activities* sets out a phased and evidence-based resumption of sporting and recreational activities in Australia. We would like to take the opportunity to point out that, fishing already exceeds the minimum criteria for phase 1 because:

- Fishing is often a solitary activity, not a group sport/activity
- Fishing already practices extensive physical distancing by the way we fish
- Fishing is solely an outdoors activity and is low risk of transmission.

Other Australian states have moved swiftly (assumed on health advice) to relax limitations for fishing and boating, if any existed as of March 31.

There is extensive evidence of the social and economic benefits of fishing and why fishing should be an essential component of the new "Covid Normal", including:

- Recreational fishing generates \$7.1 billion combined direct and indirect output including \$2.6 billion direct output to the Victorian economy;
- Recreational fishing in Victoria supports 33,967 combined direct and indirect full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, including 16,257 direct jobs;
- Fishing keeps Victorians active - particularly those who cannot or unable to jog or cycle; and
- Fishing is great for the mental health and wellbeing of Victorians.

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

We have been inundated with feedback from our constituents over the last 6 weeks. Frustration is growing from a lack of consultation for a roadmap or pathway to permit fishing and boating. Currently, VRFish Is not aware of any science-based evidence that the act of fishing and boating is a risk to the community.

While we respect that Victoria has its own unique set of circumstances to consider in the adaptive phase of the response, there are a range of options our sector could be working with you to develop a safe and responsible format of fishing and boating. For example, if regional travel and movement remains an issue, fishing can successfully occur locally across all regional areas of Victoria without the need for long distance travel.

We have previously written to the Minister of Fishing and Boating outlining our commitment to work with the Government to support flattening the curve and advocating for a safe and responsible resumption of fishing and boating.

It is for these aforementioned reasons that we appeal to you to immediately ease restrictions for recreational fishing and boating in your impending announcement on May 11. We are committed to promoting continued vigilance and public health surveillance strategies with our fishers.

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

9 May 2020