

The Hon Lisa Neville
Minister for Water
By email: lisa.neville@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister,

PATTERSON RIVER MARINA - PROHIBITION OF FISHING

We are writing to you to request a whole of government position on public access for boating and fishing in the Patterson Lakes waterways. We are requesting clarification under which laws, statues or regulations that it becomes illegal to fish in a particular area of the Patterson Lakes system and who is empowered to enforce compliance with any such requirements.

VRFish has been in contact with a young kayak fisher who was involved in an aggressive confrontation with an employee of the Patterson Lakes Marina in an area he had often fished before. This incident was videoed and has become widely known on social media and has been investigated by a range of government agencies including Victorian Fisheries Authority, Parks Victoria, Maritime Safety Victoria and Victoria Police.

This incident has highlighted confusion between public policy of access for fishing and boating and the actions of the private operator of the Patterson Lakes Marina and a need to avoid conflict in the future.

The private operator has cited fishing prohibition because of potential damage to boats yet has been unhelpful in providing the basis this prohibition. This might be their lease or freehold or some other factor, but their claimed tenure over areas or waters seems to be in conflict with other private or public owners. They also seem to be unable or unwilling to provide details of what regulations are being broken by fishing or boating in a particular area.

Melbourne Water appears to be the counterparty to the tenure of Patterson Lakes Marina. The tenure of the lease, licence or freehold holdings of this entity and their related organisations need to be investigated to establish what their rights and obligations are with regard to boating and fishing within the Patterson Lakes area.

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

We recognise this is not a simple matter as it involves not only the property rights over land and water, but also of the fish and rights of public access to public waterways. If your department could lead in an effort to provide a considered whole of government position on the situation as it pertains to public access for boating and fishing in the Patterson Lakes waterways, we will communicate these outcomes to our constituents with the aim of removing the confusion so that future conflicts are avoided.

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

4 June 2020

Cc: Gary Gaffney, CEO, Better Boating Victoria
Travis Dowling, CEO, Victorian Fisheries Authority
Cameron Toy, Director, Marine Safety Victoria
Craig Stubbings, A/Executive Director Melbourne, Parks Victoria