

David Ritman
Parks Victoria
By email: David.ritman@parks.vic.gov.au

Dear David,

RE: SUBMISSION FOR ALTONA PIER UPDRADE

Thank you for contacting VRFish, the peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria regarding the upgrade of Altona Pier.

Land-based fishing from piers attracts a diversity of recreational fishers from all walks of life. Our piers and jetties are the lifeblood for families and young children - and fishers that do not have access to a boat but want access to deeper waters where the fish are biting. Many recreational fishers begin their lifelong fishing journey dangling a line off our piers.

Altona Pier is a very important and popular land-based fishing locations in Melbourne. Recreational fishers often comment about the paucity of pier fishing options on the Western side of Port Phillip Bay which emphasises the importance of the Altona Pier to the wider community and the upgrade.

The announcement of a \$10 million-dollar upgrade of Altona Pier was met with high praise by recreational fishers, with many commenting the upgrade is long overdue.

VRFish has promoted the opportunity for recreational fishers to comment on the design options through a media release and its communication channels which reached over 20,000 people and received strong engagement. Also we wanted to bring to Parks Victoria's attention that due to the demographics of our fishers that utilise the pier and a large number of casual fishers it attracts, responses to the *Engage Victoria* survey may not fully reflect the participation and utilisation of Altona Pier as an essential and valued land-based fishing location.

The direct feedback from recreational fishers to VRFish has reinforced the core issue with the current design is the **lack of available fishing space**, particularly at the end of the pier. This has led to many comments describing significant conflict for space at the end of the pier and even some adding they no longer fish the pier because of overcrowding. This is of major concern to VRFish.

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

Responses received to the presented design options overwhelming supported a design that **maximised the available fishing space**, particularly at the end of the pier. Expectedly, comments were also received to expand the length of the pier to access deeper water.

Those fishers aware of the artificial reefs funded by recreational fishing license fees, were inclined to select a design that enables them to fish closer to the reefs to enhance their fishing, particularly for snapper. Other comments were also received that the additional pier structures would benefit the presence of southern calamari, another favoured target species.

Taking that advice on board, our consolidated advice is a **T-shape design is the preferred option**. Those fishers in favour of the design also commented they would like to have the eastern platform extended to be within closer casting distance to the eastern artificial reef cluster. The design presented does place our fishers even further away from these reef structures which would be unacceptable. Whether these artificial reefs could be moved into a new position has not been explored but would be seen as a last resort if an extension cannot be negotiated.

Other comments received asked for railings should be installed at the end of the pier for safety and the weather shelter should be placed in the centre.

The existing pier pylons are colonised with marine life and hold immense value as fish habitat. Considering the design option is proposing a complete rebuild we recommend to Parks Victoria that these pylons are left in situ to continue supporting huge fishing benefits through fish habitat. Attaching old pylons to new pylons could be trialled as it will take a number of years for new pylons to be colonised with marine organisms.

To improve the recreational fishing experience on the pier other design elements including rod holders, bins, fish ruler measuring stations and signage are all recommended in consultation with regular users of the piers.

Thank for the opportunity for recreational fishers to contribute to this exciting upgrade to our much-loved fishing location. VRFish would like to continue working with Parks Victoria to make fishing better for everyone through the Altona Pier upgrade.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Loats
Chair
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

19 August 2020