

Daniel Andrews  
Victorian Premier  
By email: [daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Premier Andrews,

## **RE: RETURN OF FISHING TO MELBOURNE**

The Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish) commends the Andrews State Governments' leadership through the continuing coronavirus epidemic and for being ahead of the COVID Roadmap.

VRFish is grateful that these efforts have provided a basis to propose the return of recreational fishing to Metropolitan Melbourne.

VRFish believes that a staged and safe approach to returning recreational fishing and boating holds a very low risk of transmission while delivering a large range of benefits to the Victorian community such as: cardio-beneficial exercise, mental health stimulus, psycho-social bonding and personal wellness improvements. It also provides economic stimulus and jobs in the sectors that support the recreation.

Recreational fishing has been able to safely and responsibly occur during Stage 3 Melbourne restrictions and in Regional Victoria during the entire response to the second wave of Covid-19. By its nature recreational fishing is Covid-safe as it is an outdoor activity usually conducted individually or in small groups and it therefore provides one of the best opportunities to meet the twin objectives of community wellness and stimulating economic activity by restoring jobs particularly in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector.

We therefore request that recreational fishing join the growing number of allowed outdoor and aquatic based recreational activities, well before any decision to fully open travel and movement is delivered.

VRFish recommends:

### **1. Recreational Fishing is Reclassified as Exercise**

VRFish is proposing that recreational fishing should be defined as a form of exercise and outdoor recreation and listed as a reason to leave home on the Chief Health Officer's directions notices. This means that even with the current 5km and 2 hour

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

recreational limits there are opportunities in the next stage to allow the community to access fishing.

## **2. Access to Boating Facilities to Guarantee a Snapper Season**

Melbourne is on the doorstep of Port Phillip and Westernport Bays where many thousands of residents live in close proximity to fishing locations. There are a number of boat ramps where many recreational fishers would reside within 5 kms of these facilities. VRFish is seeking a commitment from you to guarantee recreational fishers access to the iconic annual snapper season. Once the 5km and 2 hour limits are raised, this will allow hundreds of thousands of fishers to participate in this iconic fishery while still complying with Covid-safe practices.

## **3. Access to Local Urban Land-Based Fishing**

VRFish has supported the Victorian Fisheries Authority in developing family fishing lakes in our urban areas - with over 27 waterways stocked with native fish species and rainbow trout. These 'neighbourhood' fishing spots have been specifically developed to be close to where people live. Also, the Yarra, Werribee, Maribrynong, and Patterson Rivers all intersect urban areas and offer local fishing opportunities. Land based opportunities also abound along the margins of Port Phillip and Westernport Bays.

VRFish proposes that fishing should be considered as a Covid-safe activity that is compatible with the current movement requirements in place. We believe fishing access can be further expanded in line with anticipated easing of restrictions in the coming weeks.

VRFish stands ready to assist you in any way possible in keeping the Victorian community safe while achieving a quick and effective restoration of an important community activity and recreation.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Loats  
Chair  
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

24 September 2020

cc: Hon. Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Fishing and Boating