

[HANDLE WITH CARE]

Annual Report <sup>20-21</sup>







**Let's Make  
Fishing Better,  
For Everyone!**



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Cover image

@emmajeau\_sommer 

# Chairman's Report

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As the current chairman of VRFish it is with pleasure to report we have once again completed the financial year within budget and within our funding agreement deliverables.

The Board must manage finances with due diligence to retain a monetary surplus to ensure we can trade until our funds are allocated for the year ahead and not become insolvent. Most importantly to ensure funds to meet the costs of issues that always arise outside our Strategic and Business plans.

Over several months of this financial year a review of VRFish was conducted with a Ministerial promoted detailed term of reference. These TORs clearly outlined a directive to maintain VRFish as the states recreational fishing body, consider and implement potential improvements to ensure the fishers state-wide have every opportunity to "have their voice heard" in a democratic manner.

As a valuable component of the review the "Victoria Fisheries Authority" conducted a VRFish state-wide survey focused on the current deliverables and recreational fisher's aspirations that VRFish were currently delivering as an advocacy organisation. It came as no surprise to me that the recreational fishers of Victoria provided strong support for their Recreational Peak Body VRFish. This review was basically an endorsement of the previous changes implemented to move VRFish as an inclusive membership based Peak Body.

Fishers and members who wished to provide input could do so by contacting VRFish or becoming a member of VRFish. Most importantly continue to advocate and promote fisher's aspirations in an open independent democratic manner to the VFA, the Minister for Boating and Fishing and all Authorities and government departments.

**I commend the Minister for "Boating and Fishing" for making the correct decision following the review to offer VRFish a two-year funding agreement to ensure the recreational fishers across this wonderful state we live in to continue to "have their say".**

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Currently there is no other state-wide independent recreational fishing Peak Body that remotely comes close to the multitude of issues VRFish deals with on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. The VRFish moto is, "LET'S MAKE FISHING BETTER FOR EVERYONE" and we are committed to lead by example and strongly protect the rights of recreational fishers with an unbiased approach. Never forget VRFish is here to represent you as valuable recreational fishing community stakeholders so you can continue to enjoy your sport while fishing in

freshwater, saltwater or our valuable estuary eco-system's.

It's time to now move forward from the VRFish review outcomes and implement the gender equity Board changes, board appointment timeframes, and increase some very important advocacy outputs. It's imperative for fishers to strongly support VRFish and regularly contact us, complete our surveys and consider joining our membership. Never forget we are here to support our stakeholders, you the recreational fishers of Victoria. The VRFish membership must be commended for their 25 years of voluntary independent representative capacity at local, regional and state-wide level. Unity in numbers with your state-wide knowledge will always be identified as the correct democratic way for VRFish to deliver the aspirations of fishers VICTORIA WIDE, now and into the future.

## **New Executive Officer and Staff**

Our executive Office Mike Burgess has moved on and returned to his home state Western Australia. I must extend our appreciation to Mike for his many years of service to VRFish and wish him and his family every success for the future. Mike's contribution to VRFish will always be remembered. Under his leadership he dramatically improved the governance of VRFish, modernised

our logo and Peak Body, and with Holly, has to be credited for VRFish receiving a Federal Award for advocacy.

A special mention must be noted to Holly who has provided excellent communication deliverables for VRFish. Holly is currently on maternity leave and with her partner are now proud parents of a baby boy. VRFish will be welcoming Holly back to our team in 2022.

### Exciting New Staff Changes

VRFish have been very fortunate to appoint Ben Scullin as our new Executive Officer. Ben is very well known to the fishers of Victoria for his excellent advocacy skills. He has a strong understanding of the multitude of issues fishers need addressed and advocated for. Also included in this mix is boating access and facilities that must be promoted as improved in the marine and freshwater environments.

Recently we appointed Amanda Szabo as our new office manager. Amanda has excellent management and financial skills and will be a very welcome asset to VRFish as we move forward into the future.

We have also been fortunate to secure the services of Chloe Henderson as a member of our team. Chloe has hit the ground running with promotion and communication deliverables.

### A year of lockdowns.

Due to the Covid Virus our fishing communities have endured the worst restricted fishing conditions in living memory. Lockdown after lockdown has created confusion and prevented fishers Victoria wide from enjoying their sport. I have had a multitude of calls suggesting "if you can bend over backwards" to permit football, why not recreational fishing while boating on the ocean, or camping in the outdoors beside a river, lake or water reservoir. Let's hope Victoria is opened up as soon as possible so fishers can once again enjoy their sport, take their family and enjoy a camping experience while enjoying a campfire, have a camp oven meal or launch their boat and enjoy fishing in our bays and inlets. We must never forget, recreational fishing contributes' s \$7.1 Billion to Victoria's economy and most importantly provides regional tourism and social community wellbeing. Fisher's lifestyles have been dramatically impacted on during lockdowns and all are extremely eager to break the shackles and once again cast a line and catch a fish or two.

### The VRFish Board

Finally, I must pass on my appreciation to all Board Members for their voluntary contributions over this difficult year. Some have been with us for many years and will be moving on. With this new approach brings opportunities. Opportunities for other

VRFish Members to consider joining the Board and contributing to the governance and future proofing VRFish for the future.

The Boards role is voluntary and has often been misunderstood. The role of the VRFish Board is to maintain, apply and implement the correct governance procedures. This includes finances, ensuring strategic directions and business cases are completed following members and fisher's majority directives. The Chairperson is responsible for running Board meetings, ensuring the Executive Officer complies with proper governance and meets the expectation of their employment contracts. The Chairperson also has obligations to attend Ministerial, Authority, Agency and Forums as required, these obligations usually occur during weekday working hours and some weekends.

### Take care.

### Rob Loats

**The future of "making fishing better, for everyone" is clearly being implemented.**



*Rob Loats*  
Chairman



# Executive Officer's Report

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VRFish has continued to achieve our vision of making fishing better for everyone and is testament to our organisational resilience and the passion and commitment of our members. Only a psychic could have planned for the 2020/21 financial year and the disruption to our lives from the pandemic.

The Board of VRFish steered a steady course through one of the most challenging times we have faced and without their leadership we would not have survived. The entire board and members of VRFish deserve special recognition for the countless and selfless hours given to support the staff, and recreational fishers all throughout Victoria."

When I joined VRFish in October last year as Advocacy Manager, little did I know that by April I would be interim Executive Officer and then appointed full time in June. What an honour it is to represent recreational fishing in a leadership role.

The VRFish change agenda to meet the ministerial requirements, change our constitution and propel VRFish forward into the future as the peak body representing recreational fishing is a challenge accepted by our members.

Across the State, the ability to keep up with the changing covid restrictions, just to wet a line was as challenging as anything I have experienced. Water and Access issues came to the fore with water allocation decisions, inter valley trading and access to riparian crown land occupying a huge time and energy budget for VRFish.

The VRFish Advocacy Priorities survey showed recreational fishers across the State wanting more habitat improvements to benefit recreational fishing and the Animal Welfare Act discussion paper shone a light on the best parts of what we do and how well we do it.

**VRFish successes were not short on coming. Negotiating a new 2-year funding agreement with State Government to continue making recreational fishing better for everyone, the passage of the Land Act amendment through the upper house to improve recreational fisher access to rivers, advocating for better outcomes in water allocations and involvement in key fishery management decisions and planning were bread and butter for VRFish. We really are making fishing better for everyone.**

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The next financial year will involve good VRFish planning, opening up the State under a covid economy and re-engaging with our members in a face-to-face medium to discuss some of the most important issues we have faced in decades. Stronger Clubs and associations, better infrastructure and access and fairer decisions by those trying to lock us out will be a key focus. Learning to rig a rod again, in under a minute will also be a challenge.

As we head into the new financial year and again appreciate the small things in 'why we go fishing', it will be election campaign season for both the Federal and State parliaments. Building a 'wish list' and seeing it delivered will be a major piece of work for VRFish and our members.

Thank You!

**Ben Scullin**

Executive Officer





*Ben Scullin*

Executive Officer

**As we head into the new financial year and again appreciate the small things in 'why we go fishing...'**





# About Us



## Our Mission Statement

Let's make fishing better, for everyone.

### Who We Are

Established as the Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body, VRFish, is your not-for-profit, independent voice representing Victoria's recreational fishers since 1995. We are proud to be part of a huge and diverse community of 838,000 fishers that injects \$2.6 billion each year in economic contribution to the Victorian economy.

We are not the government. We are fishers that want to make fishing better for everyone. Whether it's fish habitat, water security and quality, fishing access and infrastructure or best practice, we aim to work in partnership to make sure Victoria's fishing experiences continue to improve, be sustainable and more enjoyable for all generations of Victorians.

To get the job done, we leverage the skills and passion of our membership and employ a small team of professional staff. The more support we have from Victorian fishers, the stronger voice we have to stand up and protect our fishing future.

### What We Do

VRFish needs to be the voice of our fish. Threats to fishing are becoming more complex than ever before as we strive to look after the environment that our fish depend on and tackle issues such as pollution, water management, industrial development, diminishing fishing access, litter and illegal fishing.

VRFish works to raise the profile of fishing as a recreational activity with significant social, cultural and economic benefits. At the same time, we are protecting our fishing lifestyle so that you can get outdoors, connect with nature, relax and enjoy quality time with your family and friends.

We are passionate about supporting you to fish for the future by fostering the adoption of responsible fishing practices and behaviours. The next generation of fishers need our support so that they are given the same opportunities to get outdoors and get hooked on fishing as when we were growing up.



# Our Priorities



## *Habitat*

Improving our vital fish habitats through protection, restoration and enhancement.



## *Promote*

Promoting fishing in Victoria, creating new and vibrant fisheries and supporting the next generation of fishers.



## *Best Practice*

Supporting our fishers to take a lead role in the stewardship of our fish and waterways, fish responsibly and promote fish for the future.



## *Water*

Keeping our rivers flowing and defending recreational and environmental water allocations.



## *Access*

Fixing our boat ramps and defending your fishing rights to access our waterways.



**VRFish works to raise the profile of fishing as a recreational activity with significant social, cultural and economic benefits.**



# Our Board Members



**Rob Loats, Chairman**

Meetings Attended 8

Rob is a primary production business manager from rural Victoria. He has extensive experience of issues associated with natural resource and water management and skills associated with government and non-government state agency inputs and outputs.

Rob has provided long term representation for his local club as president and secretary, long term representation of two local angling associations as president and is a past member of the state Fisheries Co-Management Council. He has been on the Fisheries Revenue Allocation Committee (FRAC), is a past Chairman and member of the Recreational Fishing Licence Working Group, member of the Murray Darling Basin Murray Cod Fishery Advisory Group, the North Central Catchment Management Authority Community Leaders Group, Chair of the Northcentral CMA Gunbower, Lower Loddon Native Fish Recovery Plan and a current member of the Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery and Liberation Governance Board. He is a current member of the DELWP Riparian Forum Advisory Group and Life Member of the Mid Northern and Wimmera Angling Associations and Donald Angling Club. Rob's efforts have also earned him the National Mal Ramsay Lifetime Achievement Award 2012. Rob has always been interested in water quality and has recently completed 25 years of voluntary water monitoring with the North Central CMA Waterwatch Program.



**Steven Relf,  
Deputy Chairman**

Meetings Attended 7

Steven brings a wealth of experience to the Board of VRFish and is experienced in dealing with a variety of complex issues, adding value to the organisation in an ever-changing environment. Now retired Steven has had over 26 years experience as a senior manager in local government. A member of the Dunlop Bayswater Angling Club (39 years) and Club President for the last 20 years, Steven has a strong commitment to our rivers and streams and a desire to see them returned to their natural condition. Steven is the Former President of the Howqua Association Angling Clubs, and has been a delegate of VRFish for the last 20 years. Steven is the current deputy chair of VRFish and chair of the finance and access committee's.

Steven believes fishers need a strong peak body who can advocate on their behalf and provide a voice back to the VFA and government

As a VRFish representative he is able to give back to the sport he has enjoyed for many years.



**Russell Conway**

Meetings Attended 6

Russell has been a keen and passionate recreational fisher for over 40 years. He enjoys fishing our quiet country streams and lakes chasing trout and native species just as much as the thrill of fishing for pelagic species around our magnificent coastline.

Russell is the President of the Metropolitan Anglers Association, Chairman of RecFish Australia, past Chairman of VRFish and a life member of the Greensborough & District Angling Club. Russell provides recreational fishing industry expertise to the Board of the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC), is a member of the FRDC Recfishing Research Committee and is also a member of the Australian Fish Names Committee.

Russell's various roles have provided him with a good understanding of the diverse issues challenging recreational fishers and the importance of effective representation and advocacy to ensure we can all continue to enjoy fishing in the future.





**Franz Grasser**

Meetings Attended 6

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Franz spent his career in various management roles in the energy sector. During this career, Franz commenced a journey of advocacy for the clean energy sector as a board member of a number of Sustainable Energy Industry organisations that were the precursor organisations of the present Clean Energy Council.

The skills Franz brings to VRFish are based on this business and advocacy experience as well as his lifelong fishing experience. This knowledge of advocacy and leadership includes decades of experience as a board member of advocacy organisations.

As an unaffiliated member of VRFish, Franz connects with fishers who are not part of formal fishing organisations. Franz joined VRFish and stood for election to the Board because of his love of fishing and the prospect that his input can make a positive contribution to sustaining recreational fishing into the future. In recent years Franz has been the Chair of the VRFish Access and Infrastructure Reference Group and has been heavily involved in the successful advocacy for improved funding and management of boating infrastructure.



**John Hotchin**

Meetings Attended 5

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John has been actively involved with VRFish since the beginning, he has actively participated in various subcommittees and brings a wealth of knowledge to the VRFish Board. He firmly believes in VRFish and strives to meet the goals set by the fishing community.

John is President of the Geelong Fly Fishing Club and Secretary/ Grants Officer of the Geelong and District Angling Clubs Association. He is a life member of the Geelong Sport and Game Fishing Club and Geelong and District Angling Clubs Association. For 30 years, he has actively promoted recreational fishing around the Geelong region through coordinating the Ron Nelson Memorial Junior Fishing Clinic on behalf of the Geelong and District Angling Clubs. John has also been very active in acquiring grants to improve recreational fishing opportunities around Geelong.



**Joy Sloan**

Meetings attended 6

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Joy Sloan has 30 years' experience in Natural Resource Management and 12 years with Fisheries Victoria. Joy has a very strong understanding of issues facing recreational angling and knowledge of the inter-relationships between Natural Resource Management Agencies and how these agencies can benefit or impact recreational angling and anglers.

She brings to VRFish strength in building relationships, developing partnerships, negotiating collaborative outcomes, facilitating, and organizing people, information and events, developing logic-based evaluation and evidence based collecting processes, developing innovative ideas and creative problem solving.

Joy is a passionate advocate for recreational fishing and recreational fishers and has a strong commitment to aligning professional work ethics with personal values centered on integrity, collaboration, environmental and social stewardship and as a member of the VRFish Board, she has the opportunity to continue to advocate for and provide advice to recreational anglers.



### **Neville Dance**

Meetings attended 6

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Neville has been an avid fisherperson since he was 6 years old and fishing in the Hopkins and Curdies Rivers with his father. Around the age of 18, Neville developed a strong urge to start saltwater fishing. This passion encouraged Neville to join the Warrnambool Offshore & Light Game Fishing Club and the Game Fishing Association of Victoria. He is now a life member of both clubs.

Neville previously served as Vice-President of the Game Fishing Association of Victoria and still remains on their committee. He has also served as a member of the Recreational Fishing Licence Grants Committee. He currently represents the Game Fishing Association of Victoria to VRFish.



### **Halley Xu**

Meetings attended 2

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Halley is the President of the Victoria Chinese Angling Association and represents more than 1400 registered members. The Victoria Chinese Angling Association aims to provide Australian Chinese fishing enthusiasts with comprehensive fishing related information including safety awareness, fishing techniques and locations.

Halley is passionate about safety awareness and providing safety information to recreational fishers with a particular interest in rock fishing safety. Many culturally and linguistically diverse communities participate in rock fishing which can be a risky activity, especially if fishers are not used to the local conditions. Halley believes that VRFish has an opportunity to deliver valuable outcomes for recreational fishers through delivering vital information about conditions at popular fishing locations to enable fishers to make informed decisions before embarking on fishing trips.

As a Board member of VRFish, Halley looks forward to connecting with VRFish members, delivering safety workshops, sharing vital sharing information with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and working together to translate important safety information to ensure all recreational fishers are able to access vital safety information.



### **Kris Leckie**

Meetings attended 4  
Resigned 14/4/21

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Kris is currently serving his second term as a board director since joining VRFish back in 2016 and has been instrumental in helping drive the transformation that has seen VRFish become a modern and influential peak body.

Kris is a passionate conservationist with a particular interest in improving the health of our waterways and as the chairman of the VRFish Habitat and Water Reference Group, actively represents VRFish on numerous committees and stakeholder reference groups to advocate for better fish habitat and thriving recreational fisheries.

Professionally, Kris had many years of management experience in the engineering sector before undertaking a career change after studying conservation and land management, and now works in the environmental water management industry.

Kris enjoys all methods of fishing and targets a wide range of species, but predominantly spends most of his angling days fly fishing for trout in the Yarra Valley or chasing cod in northern Victoria whilst passing on the angling tradition to his two young children.





### **Rita Caulfield**

No meetings for 20/21  
Term commenced 4/6/21

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Rita currently works in the fishing tackle industry and is a familiar face on the tackle/boat/camping industry show circuit.

Rita's passion for recreational fishing, small business acumen and massive Cod smashing ability will serve recreational fishers well.

Rita was appointed to replace retired Board member and environmental warrior, Kris Leckie.

Within the rec fishing community, she's known as 'Metre Rita' after reeling in 2x metre barramundi on consecutive casts. As one of the of top ranked Murray cod lure fishers in Australia, Rita has more 'metre cod' under her belt than the VRFish Board and Executive combined.



### **Skye Kirne**

No meetings for 20/21  
Term commenced 23/09/2021

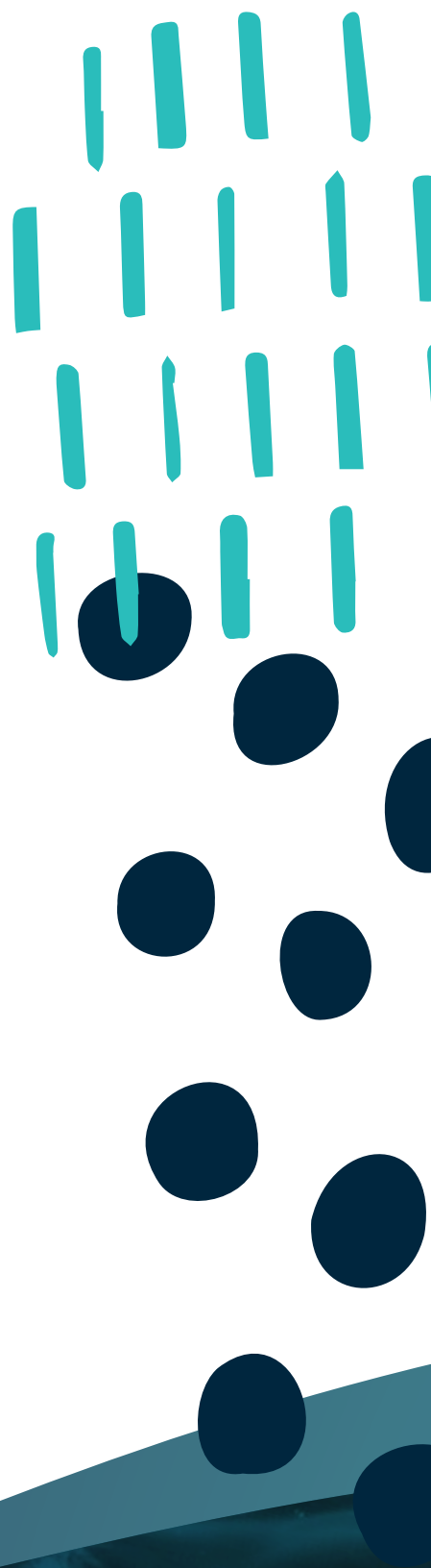
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"You can take the girl out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the girl". Is very fitting for Skye.

Skye was born in the Murray Cod region of northern Australia and now runs a successful travel agency – SKYE TRAVEL. The agency enables Skye to combine all her passions together - fishing, scuba diving & travelling. She even manages to call it work, and says, "someone's got to do the research for clients".

When Skye's in Victoria, you'll find her in Port Philip Bay, either in her tinnie fishing for anything on the bite or under the water scuba diving. Skye's an active member and jokes around with her fishing companions at Albert Park Angling Club. In 2018 she joined the VFA program - Women in Recreational Fishing as a Leader to engage, share and excite women about fishing. S

kye has also been a member of the VFA State-wide Recreational Fishing Roundtable Forum for the past few years. Having such an active background in fishing all around Australia, earlier this year, while Skye was fishing for barramundi in NT, she was invited to join the VRFish board, and accepted the role energetically.



# *VRFish Members*

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## VRFish Foundation Member Organisations

- Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club
- Australian Anglers Association (Vic)
- Australian National Sportsfishing Association (Vic)
- Ballarat and Districts Anglers Association
- Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron
- Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs
- Game Fishing Association of Victoria
- Geelong and District Angling Clubs Association
- Gippsland Angling Clubs Association
- Goulburn Valley Association of Angling Clubs
- Fishcare Victoria
- Howqua Angling Clubs Fish Protection Society
- Metropolitan Angling Association
- Midland and North Central Angling Association
- Mid Northern Association of Angling Clubs
- Native Fish Australia (Vic)
- SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria
- South West District Association of Angling Clubs
- Torquay Angling Club
- Victoria Chinese Angling Association
- Victorian Piscatorial Council
- Wimmera Anglers Association

## Fishing Club Supporters

- Altona Boating Angling Club
- Anderson Inlet Angling Club Inverloch Inc.
- Bairnsdale Flyfishers Club Inc
- Bairnsdale RSL Fishing Club
- Balmoral & District Angling Club
- Barham Angling Club
- Bass Strait Game Fishing Club
- Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron
- Bellarine Pirates Angling Club
- Bendigo & District Fly Fishers Inc
- Bendigo Legion Angling Club Inc
- Bentleigh RSL Angling Club
- Berwick Angling Club
- Black Dog Creek Fishing Club
- Blackrock Under Water Dive Group
- Blind Bight Fishing Club
- Brighton Central Angling Club
- Brunswick City Anglers Club
- Burrenbeet Anglers Club
- Camperdown Angling Club Inc
- Casterton Angling Society Inc
- Central Vic Lure Casters
- Charlton Angling Club Inc
- Clayton RSL Angling Club
- Cobden Angling Club Inc
- Corinella Boating and Angling Club

- Corio Bay Anglers Club
- Craigieburn Angling Club Inc
- Dandenong Club Sports Fishing Clubs
- Derrinallum Anglers Club
- Didyabringyarodalong Angling Club Inc
- Donald Angling Club
- Dunlop Bayswater Angling Club
- Elwood Angling Club
- Fairfield-Alphington Fish Protection Society & Angling Club
- Geelong & District Anglers Club and Fish Protection Society
- Geelong Freedivers
- Geelong Gun and Rod Association Inc
- Geelong Western Beach Fishing Club
- Greensborough & District Angling Club
- Greenvale Sport and Game Fishing Club
- Healesville Angling & Fish Protection Society Inc
- Hobsons Bay Sport and Game Fishing Club Inc
- Horsham Angling Club Inc
- Jingellic-Walwa Fishing Club
- Keysborough Angling Club Inc
- Kiewa Valley Fishing Club
- King River and District Fishing Club
- Knox Boat Fishing Club
- Knox Club Sportfishing Club
- Kyneton Angling Club
- La Trobe Valley Scuba Club inc.
- Lake Boga Sports Fishing Club
- Lake Mulwala Angling Club
- Lake Purrumbete Angling Club
- Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club Inc
- Leongatha Angling Club Inc
- Leopold Angling and Aquatic Club
- Loch Sport Fishing Association Inc
- Longwarry Angling Club Inc
- Lorne Aquatic and Angling Club
- Lowhead Road Fishing Club Inc
- Loy Yang Recreational Angling Club Inc
- Maffra & District Angling Club
- Maldon Angling and Outdoors Club Inc.
- Maryborough Angling Club Inc
- Mitcham Angling Club
- Mordialloc Boating & Angling Club
- Mornington Peninsula Fly Fishers Inc
- Myrtleford & District Sportfishing Club
- Nagambie Angling Club Inc.
- Nangiloc Fishing Club
- Nicholson Angling Club
- Noble Park RSL Anglers Club
- Oakdale Angling Club & Fish Protection Society
- Ormond Angling Club & FPS
- Pakenham Angling Club
- Port Albert Light Game & Sports Fishing Club Inc
- Port Campbell Boating Club
- Port Fairy Angling Club
- Portland Sport Fishing Club
- Preston Northcote Angling Club

- Red Tag Flyfishers
- Ringwood and District Angling Club Inc
- Rochester & District Angling Club
- Rosebud RSL Angling Club
- Rowwillian Angling Club
- Sandringham Anglers Club
- Snapper Point Angling Club
- Southern Boat Fishing Club
- Southern Fly Fishers (Aust) Inc
- Southern Peninsula Angling Club
- Stawell and District Angling Club Incorporated
- St Arnaud Angling Club
- Sunbury Angling Club Inc
- Sunshine Fly Casting Club
- Tatong Anglers Group
- Thorpdale and District Angling Club
- Toolamba Fishing Club Inc
- Tooradin Angling Club
- Torquay Angling Club
- Undera Angling Club
- Upwey Angling Club Inc
- Venus Bay Angling Club
- Victoria Police Angling Club Inc.
- Victorian Game Fishing Club
- Wangaratta Fly Fishing Club Inc.
- Warrnambool & District Anglers Club
- Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc
- Warrnambool Offshore & LG Fishing Club
- Waverley and District Anglers
- Werribee and District Anglers Club
- Westernport Angling Club
- Williamstown Sportfishing & Game Club
- Wimmera Offshore Sport & Gamefishing Club
- Wonthaggi Angling Club
- Wy-Yung Angling Club
- Yaringa Fishing Club
- Yarra Valley Fly Fishers
- Yinnar Angling Club Inc.

## Affiliated Organisations

- Boating Industry Association of Victoria (BIAV)
- Dive Industry of Victoria Association (DIVA)
- OzFish Unlimited – Lennox Head
- OzFish Unlimited – Bayside Chapter
- OzFish Unlimited – South West Chapter
- Professional Fishing Instructors and Guides Association
- Victorian Fishing Charter Association



**Skye  
Kirne**



# Member Stories

## Victoria Police Angling Club Inc. / Australian Anglers' Association (Victorian Division) Inc.

### Tim Hose - Secretary

I am now in my 70's having fished most of my life and still doing it. It gets harder but it is enjoyable, especially with fishing club events and members having the same interest.

When I was about 7 years of age my uncle came to live in Geelong with us. He took me on a tram to Geelong city and on the way we went to a tackle shop named "Wiggs" in Moorabool Street. He bought me a spool of line, several hooks and 2 sinkers. We walked to the Geelong Yacht Club jetty where he rigged my hand line and I fished for the first time. My uncle used a fishing rod with a Bakelite reel and cast along way out. I caught about 6 King George whiting by dropping the line over the jetty and straight down. My uncle caught several flathead. We went home on the tram and that night my mother cooked the fish we had caught.

Sometime later, my uncle gave me a flat steel fishing rod and a Bakelite reel as a present (birthday of Christmas I don't recall). My father sometimes took me to the Yarra Street pier and I fished and he would pick me up at a later time until I was old enough to ride my bike to the pier to fish. I remember breaking the end of the steel fishing rod so I saved my paperboy money to buy another fishing rod.

My neighbour took me to "Wiggs" tackle shop where I bought a Jarvis walker fibreglass rod. I used the Bakelite reel with this rod to fish off the Yarra Street Pier. I still have that outfit today, 60 years later. I fished when I

was allowed for several years catching flathead and recall using a 4 ounce wonder wobbler with line on a coke bottle to catch barracouta from the pier. I also went fishing for the trevalla and snapper as the years progressed.

**At some stage I stopped fishing regularly, possibly school got in the way and I stopped riding my bike. I was a teenager with other distractions. I joined Victoria Police in 1968 and discovered they had a Police Angling Club which I joined. I discovered surf fishing and used a 12 foot cane/ bamboo fishing rod with an Alvey fishing reel off 13th beach for salmon fishing in the 1970's.**

I eventually married, had children and bought a 16ft Clarke open boat in the 1980's and began fishing off Queenscliff and would regularly fish Club events all over Victorian. I began fishing for Victoria in the Australian Anglers Association Convention and Championships held biannually, each State taking its turn for the event. A most memorable time was winning the Off-Shore event at Ballina in 1983 in the Victorian State Team. I never missed fishing the AAA National championships since 1979.

I was Secretary of Victoria Police Angling Club from 1978 to 1997 and again from 2007 and still remain as Secretary today. In 2003 I was elected Secretary of the Australian Anglers

Association (Victorian Division) and I am still in that position. (I hold the secretarial positions in both the AAA and Club (because no one wants the job) but I don't mind.

Fishing has created a remarkable way of life, with great memories, many acquaintances and has given me something to do (Secretarial stuff) in retirement. In the past I also played football, basketball and cricket and had 19 years racing triathlons in Victoria and interstate until 2015. I still miss the lot but still have many memories.

## Gippsland Angling Club Association

Robert Caune

Foremost, the Gippsland Angling Club Association is looking forward in anticipation to the start of a new era for recreational fishers in the Gippsland Lakes.

The King George Whiting fishing over the last twelve months has provided an absolute highlight for local and visiting recreational anglers, with the banning of commercial netting less than two years ago; the first green shoots of recovery are starting to appear.

Black Bream, which the Gippsland Lakes is famous for, has several generations of younger fish coming through from recent spawning events. When these fish reach legal size, the Gippsland Lakes will hopefully be once again the Black Bream capital of Victoria.

In response to the community support for the preservation of fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes, many clubs of the associations continue to evolve their club's fishing competitions by incorporating technology that allows club members to use their mobile phones to record and submit their catch. It's wonderful to see our clubs acknowledging and responding to changing community values and making these modifications.

**Much of what has been achieved in Gippsland has been a result of our association's members working with their peak representative body, VRFish, to help us communicate our goals and aspirations to government.**

Our members are passionate about their fishing and their local area and want to have their views heard by Victorian fisheries managers. VRFish has provided our community with the reliable opportunities to have these important conversations. Ad hoc and sporadic consultations are not the basis of a respectful relationship with fisheries managers.

With good rainfall and significant fisheries reforms in hand over the last two years, Gippsland is in a great position to enjoy a prosperous fishing future. The Gippsland recreational fishing community looks forwards to making our representative organizations stronger to ensure that our fishing future remains strong and secure.



**Tristan  
Armstrong**





## Midland and North Central Angling Association

Greg Hellsten

Midland and North Central Angling Association members are fully supportive and appreciative of the efforts made by the VRFish as the Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body representing recreational fishers despite the challenges faced during the past year. We look forward to engaging with the new VRFish board and staff in their work to improve fishing opportunities in the Loddon-Campaspe basins.

**Many fishers travel to our region, and recent boating access to local storages along with diversity of stocked species, and habitat improvement projects will enhance the economic and social value of local fishing.**

M&NCAA's VRFish State council members Sean Crombie and Greg Hellsten have worked closely with the North Central CMA to contribute to the development of the Tullaroop Catchment Integrated Catchment

Management Plan and will be part of Tullaroop Restoration Project Reference Group which will be the key source of information guiding the implementation of the ICMP by the technical working group, and for distributing project information to the public.

Kyneton Angling Club was successful in leading negotiations with stakeholders for improved man/electric powered boat access onto Upper Coliban reservoir, for maintaining an enthusiastic competition program throughout the Covid19 epidemic restrictions and for being the centre for the establishment of OzFish Unlimited's Campaspe-Loddon chapter by M&NCAA members.

Bendigo and District Fly Fishers' Barkers Creek (Harcourt) Reservoir Trout Fishery Recovery Project is continuing because of poor angler returns with a new phase of in-water habitat improvement and water level management negotiations with the water manager.

Ongoing issues remain with re-establishment of in-water and riparian habitat to be effective at varying water levels, especially at Eppalock, Cairn Curran, and Barkers Creek reservoirs, and strengthening of the social capital of our member angling clubs with the help of VRFish and the VFA.

M&NCAA was able to hold its annual Midland Shield competition in 2020 due to the persistence of Sean Crombie and the discipline of competing anglers towards COVID safe settings. Lack of a cost-effective meeting venue has been an issue for M&NCAA, but daylight savings and good weather allowed us to recently hold an effective general meeting in Memorial Park, Castlemaine using a telephone connection and occasional torch light.

Bill Moody retired as president of M&NCAA after ten years in the role and we thank both Bill for his continuing support and his wife Margaret for her contribution at meetings and generosity in providing supper for all those years.

**Leisha Kilpatrick**

@leish\_freshwater\_fishing



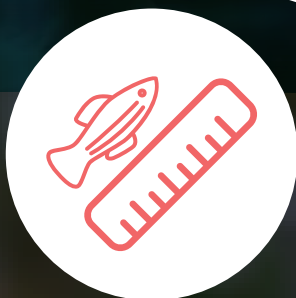
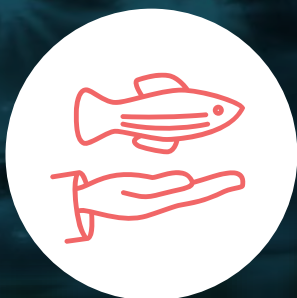
# VRFish Priorities



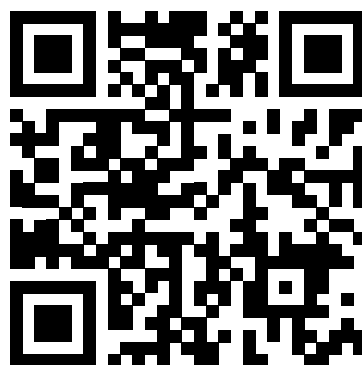
**John  
Condcliffe**







*Check all the  
latest news  
and 2020/21  
highlights.*





# Habitat and Water

## Habitat

The project connects vital habitat for recreational fish species in the Gunbower and lower Loddon basins in the North Central CMA region.

## Water

The project delivers on effective use of natural and irrigation flows to support fish populations “making every drop count... twice”

## *Protecting, Restoring & Enhancing Where Fish Live*

### Our Vision

To improve fish habitat so that our recreational fisheries can thrive, through:

- Habitat protection, restoration and enhancement
- Co-management of natural resources
- Secure water allocations for recreational fishing
- Shared benefits for recreational fishing from environmental flows

Victorian fishers know that without healthy fish habitat they don't have a fishery. VRFish continues to advocate for investment in fish habitat and promotes the role that all Victorian recreational fishers can play in identifying areas that require attention and leading the implementation of restoration efforts. There are many recreational fishing organisations, fishing clubs and volunteers that are undertaking tremendous work on behalf of their fishery. Inland efforts have been impacted due to COVID-19 restrictions and works pivoted towards recovery from devastating bushfires. Promoting the value of environmental water to our fishing has continued and the importance of continued recreational water allocations to our stocked fishing lakes, particularly in the west of the State.



# Access



## *Ensuring Better Access to Fishing Opportunities*

### Our Vision

Safe, easy and ongoing access, through:

- Maintaining and extending access to fisheries
- Improved pier and land-based fishing opportunities
- Better boating infrastructure, governance and investment
- Safe harbours for ocean fishing

Access is a significant issue facing recreational fishers in Victoria. A high priority for VRFish is ensuring better access and appropriate facilities so that all Victorians can enjoy the vast range of fishing opportunities across the state.

By providing adequate access, it will allow people of all ages, backgrounds, demographics and ability to enjoy wetting a line.

VRFish is representing fishers to inform the development and delivery of Better Boating initiatives and reviews of the current management system. VRFish and its members spend countless hours advocating for access or maintaining our current level of access.





# Participation

## *Increased Participation in Fishing*

### Our Vision

**Increased participation and recognition of the benefits of recreational fishing, through:**

- Promoting and growing participation amongst non-fishers, especially youth
- Affordable fishing opportunities
- Quality fishing experiences and catch rates
- Improved recognition and social and economic benefits
- Stronger fishing clubs and associations

VRFish is a membership organisation of people that love fishing. It's only natural our work is aimed at making fishing better for everyone and attracting new people to our wonderful sport. Victoria is blessed to have a diverse range of fishing opportunities and we are cognisant to promote affordable and family-friendly fishing as part of this amazing mix.

We know how important recreational fishing is to the economy of Victoria and health and well-being of individuals and communities. Our role is to ensure recreational fishing is recognised for these benefits from members of Parliament, the media and the community as a whole. Fishing clubs and associations are an integral part of our recreational fishing sector, their local communities and VRFish. Our vision is to support clubs to thrive and become stronger.



# Best Practice

## *Promoting Best Practice Fisheries Management & Informed Fishers*

### Our Vision

**Best practice fisheries management and informed fishers, through:**

- Adoption of responsible fishing practices and behaviours
- Prioritised fish stocking
- Science-based and responsible fisheries regulation
- Greater investment into research, development and extension
- Legislative recognition of recreational fishing
- Improved aquatic pest management

VRFish are leaders in promoting best practice behaviours and attitudes within our sector, as well as raising awareness and helping the fishing community understand their rights and obligations. Our Code of Conduct is central in fostering greater stewardship within our fishers. Recreational fishers expect sustainably managed fisheries and strive for quality fishing experiences.

Recreational fishers know too well the adverse impacts that pest species have on our aquatic ecosystems and our fishing. VRFish provides consolidated and expertise-based advice back to Government in the development of fisheries management plans and when management issues arise. To make fishing better for all Victorian fishers and regional communities, VRFish and our members play a vital role in shaping the annual inland fish stocking program.

**Brian Murrell**



# Organisational Excellence, Advocacy & Partnerships

## *Striving for Organisational Excellence, Advocacy & Building Partnerships*

### Our Vision

Continually striving for organisational excellence, through:

- Quality governance and organisational processes
- Greater accountability to stakeholders
- Improved recognition and support from recreational fishers
- Strategic and effective communications and engagement
- Strong and constructive relationships with Government and Stakeholders

Through our endeavor for organisational excellence, we have built a strong foundation around our members and collaborative partnerships with other organisations. With our limited resources, we leverage our success and achievement through the passion and tireless advocacy of our volunteer membership and effective working partnerships with our stakeholders. As a strong and independent peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria, we continue to be open, transparent and accountable to maintain support from recreational fishers.



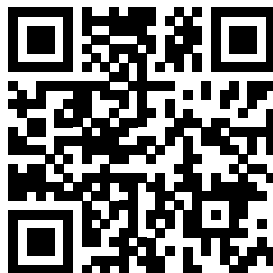


**Austin  
Duncombe**

@austins\_fishing\_



*Check all the  
latest news  
and 2020/21  
highlights.*



**Cameron  
Brookes**

@cbx2\_fish



# Strategic Plan

## 2020 – 2024

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### Key Focus Area:

As the Peak Body,  
this means we will focus on:

#### Protecting our fishing future

Engaging our members, recreational fishers and other groups to plan for our future.  
Being at the forefront of promoting responsible and ethical fishing and best practice in fisheries management.

#### Enhancing our fishing experiences

Understanding what impacts our members when they are fishing in order to effectively improve experiences for recreational fishers.

#### Leading and innovating

Presenting a clear advocacy platform and anchoring our thinking in the future.  
Creating best practice and innovation through developing the skills of our staff, board and other.





## This will make a difference for you by:

- Keeping you updated on what we are doing and how you can be involved.
- Linking the activities, you love with a new generation of recreational fishers.
- Working to secure access to your fisheries.
- Informing you about the fishing management priorities and policies.

## What we will have achieved together by 2024 is:

- No net loss of fisheries and access to recreational fishing.
- Members, recreational fishers and other groups will know the way we do things at VRFish and how we engage with them.
- There are more new recreational fishers of all ages actively involved with VRFish.
- Increased the recognition of the role recreational fishers play in the stewardship and conservation of fish and our waterways.

- Giving you information about our plans and solutions to make fishing better.
- Making it easy for you to share information about fishing with us and others.
- Knowing our position statements and having an opportunity to shape them.

- Better fishing opportunities, including increased boat launching capacity and quality.
- Marine, freshwater and estuarine habitat restoration and enhancement rolling plans are successfully implemented and activated.
- An effective feedback loop system is in place and operating well so we know what is happening and so do you.

- Securing more support for recreational fishing.
- Growing the number of people who share our interests in recreational fishing.
- Developing our ability to fund what is important to recreational fishers.

- Recreational fishers, the government and the public will be more aware of and informed about our advocacy efforts and will be able to engage to make a stronger voice.
- There will be greater diversity of people who are actively involved in VRFish through membership.
- Multiple revenue streams are in place to ensure we are sustainable and investing in areas of importance.
- We have an effective leadership and governance program in place.
- Our members and partners will feel valued.

# Native fish recovery plan

## North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA)

The recovery of native fish populations in the states north has never looked better thanks to the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA), their partners, and VRFish. It is estimated that native fish populations have decreased by 90% across the Murray Darling Basin since early European settlement.

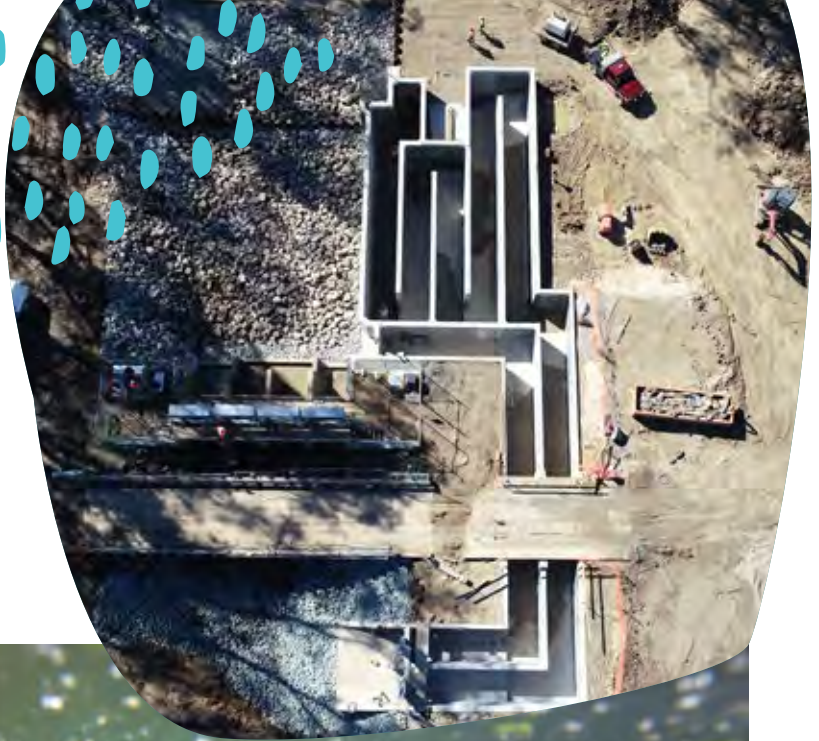
The \$7.1 million Native Fish Stimulus Project is part of the Victorian Government's \$2.7 billion Building Works initiative to support projects and jobs across Victoria as part of its coronavirus (COVID-19) economic recovery. The project is a key part of the North Central CMA's flagship project, the Native Fish Recovery Plan – Gunbower and Lower Loddon, which aims to create a "world Murray cod trophy fishery in Victoria's Gunbower and lower Loddon system". ([http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/native\\_fish\\_recovery\\_plan\\_brochure\\_fishing\\_webready.pdf](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/native_fish_recovery_plan_brochure_fishing_webready.pdf))

The project has already seen the construction of two new fishways at Koondrook Weir and Cohuna Weir. Constructed by Goulburn-Murray Water with additional funding from the Victorian Environmental Water Holder native fish can, for the first time in decades, move freely downstream into the Murray River.

Over the next few years, Native Fish Stimulus project activities include the construction of a fish exclusion screen on the Koondrook No. 4 & 5 irrigation offtake channel, preventing fish being lost from the creek system into irrigation channels; construction of fishways at Dehnes Weir and Taylors Weir on Taylors Creek (Gunbower, Vic.) opening up movement of iconic fishing species between Kow Swamp, Taylors Creek and Gunbower Creek; and modification to the existing but outdated fishway at Gunbower Weir. The modifications will bring the fishway into line with the latest research regarding fish movement and allow safe passage of recreational and endangered native fish at all life stages. Project works will make the most of use of existing water allocations to improve fish populations and not affect the delivery of water for irrigators.

**The project is good news for native fish populations and great news for recreational fishing and tourism for local communities which contributes to more than \$307M annually to the regional economy in north-western Victoria.**

VRFish Chairman Rob Loats is a huge fan of the project and will continue to provide his valuable knowledge and input through the Native Fish Stimulus 2020 Project Steering Committee. Visit the North Central CMA website for more information on the native fish stimulus projects (<http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/projects/biodiversity/boosting-native-fish-recovery>) and the Native Fish Recovery Plan.





# Communication & Engagement



## Social Media

Oct 2020 – Oct 2021



likes

11,400



followers

2,700



followers

1,192



instagram tags

2,369



subscribers

52,015

Facebook Reach:

197,948 down 39.7%



### TOP 5 POSTS

#### 1. FISHING AS A EXERCISE ALLOWED UNDER LOCKDOWN!

Recreational fishing as exercise is allowed, provided: It's within 5km from your home. **Reach: 34.4k Engagement: 3.2k**

#### 2. LEISHA REELED IN A NEW PB...

Leisha reeled in a new PB wild brown trout while fishing the Mitta. **Reach: 28,022 Engagements: 1,061**

#### 3. IT'S CRAY TIME!

Season opens on Tuesday 1 June.

**Reach: 23,604, Engagement: 315**

#### 4. PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC LAND!

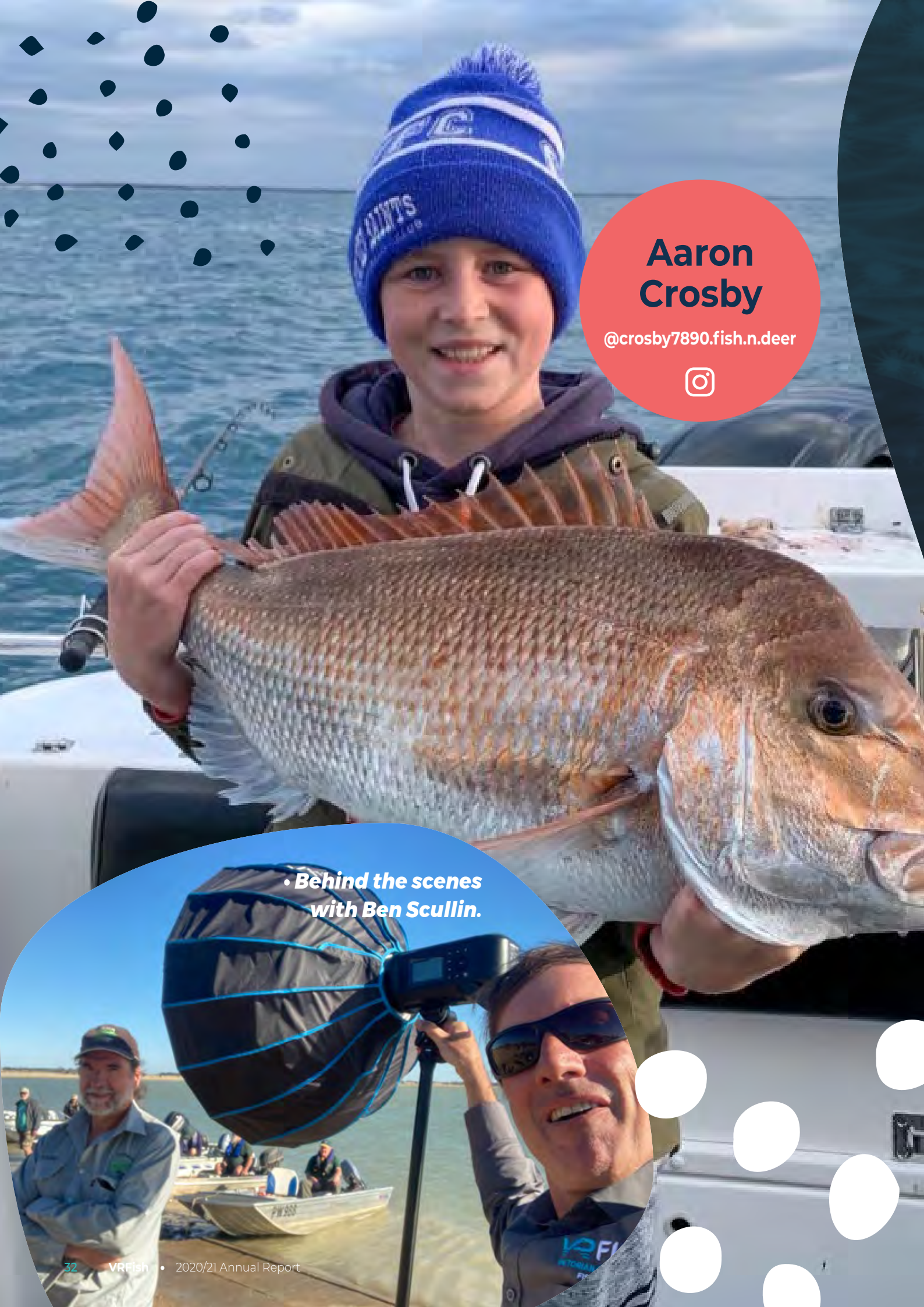
For too long recreational fishers..

**Reach: 23,478, Engagement: 232**

#### 5. A MASSIVE 500 'STONKER...

Rainbow trout will be stocked across 18 familiar

**Reach: 20,607, Engagement: 319**



**Aaron  
Crosby**

@crosby7890.fish.n.deer



• **Behind the scenes  
with Ben Scullin.**







## *Top 10 News Articles*

1. - **Boat Ramp cams – page views: 21,368**
2. - **Fishing as exercise allowed under lockdown – Page views: 18,777**
3. - **Campaign success to allow camping on crown land – Page views: 2,121**
4. - **Murray-spiny-freshwater-crayfish – Page views: 1,773**
5. - **Responsible camping rules on crown land – Page views: 1,601**
6. - **Stonker trout stocked across Melbourne – Page views: 1464**
7. - **Covid roadmap and fishing – page views: 1,422**
8. - **Sea urchins taking over port phillip bay – Page views: 1,364**
9. - **Cray time 2 – Page views: 1,358**
10. - **Where to go fishing and camping this summer – Page views: 1,170**



## *Website*

Oct 1 2020 – Oct 28 2021

Page views

**166,901**

Users

**95,934**





**Bailey  
McCredden**

@baileymccredden

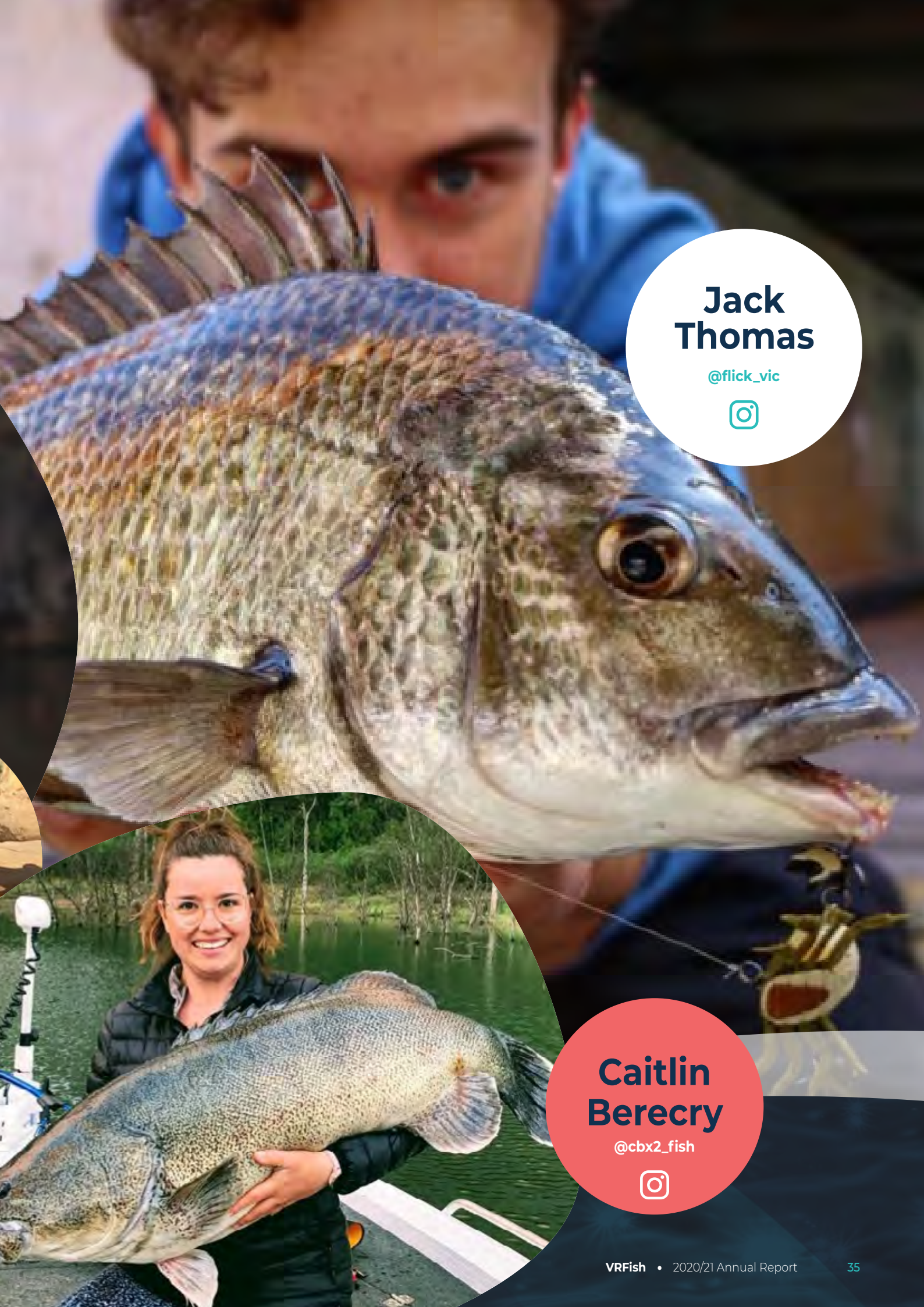


**Luke  
Rodgers**

@nathan\_wright\_fishing\_







**Jack  
Thomas**

@flick\_vic



**Caitlin  
Berecny**

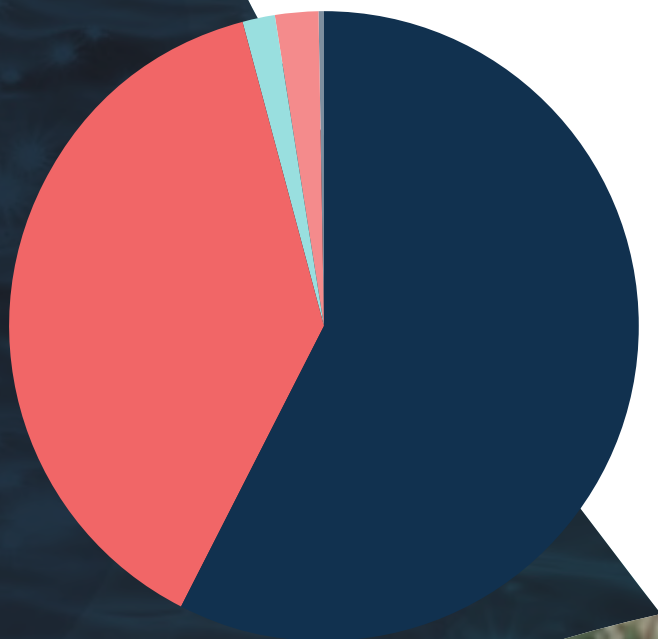
@cbx2\_fish



# ***VRFish Expenditure***

## ***2020/21***

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- Salary and wages - \$285,452
- Operating Costs - \$189,943
- Board and Meeting Expenses - \$9,297
- Depreciation and Amortisation - \$9,791
- Membership - \$1,358



**@jimbob**







Let's make fishing  
better, for everyone.



**FISH**

VICTORIAN RECREATIONAL  
FISHING PEAK BODY

# RECREATIONAL FISHING CODE OF CONDUCT

VRFISH HAS DEVELOPED THIS CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RECREATIONAL BOAT, SHORE, RIVER, STREAM AND JETTY FISHERS IN VICTORIA.

Recreational fishers have a responsibility to look after fisheries resources for the benefit of the environment and future generations of fishers. This Code of Conduct provides guidelines to minimise conflicts on the water, demonstrate best practice for responsible fishing and result in a more enjoyable fishing experience for all.

**1**

Awareness of and compliance with fishing **REGULATIONS**.



**6**

Always seek **PERMISSION** when entering private property.



**2**

**RESPECT** the rights of other anglers and users.



**7**

Use **ESTABLISHED** access roads and tracks.



**3**

**PROTECT** and restore the environment and fish habitat.



**8**

**ATTEND** to your fishing gear and value your catch.



**4**

Carefully return **UNDERSIZED**, oversized, protected or unwanted catch back to the water.



**9**

**EDUCATION** - pass on your knowledge.



**5**

Fish species and other organisms must not be **RELOCATED**/transferred into other water bodies.



**10**

Respect Aboriginal sites, **CULTURE** and values.



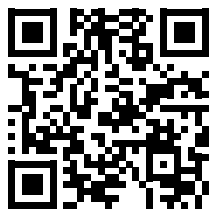




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**VOFISH**  
VICTORIAN RECREATIONAL  
FISHING PEAK BODY





@purple5ive\_Captures

**Robyn  
Cleggett**

@hoodies\_hobie\_fishing







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