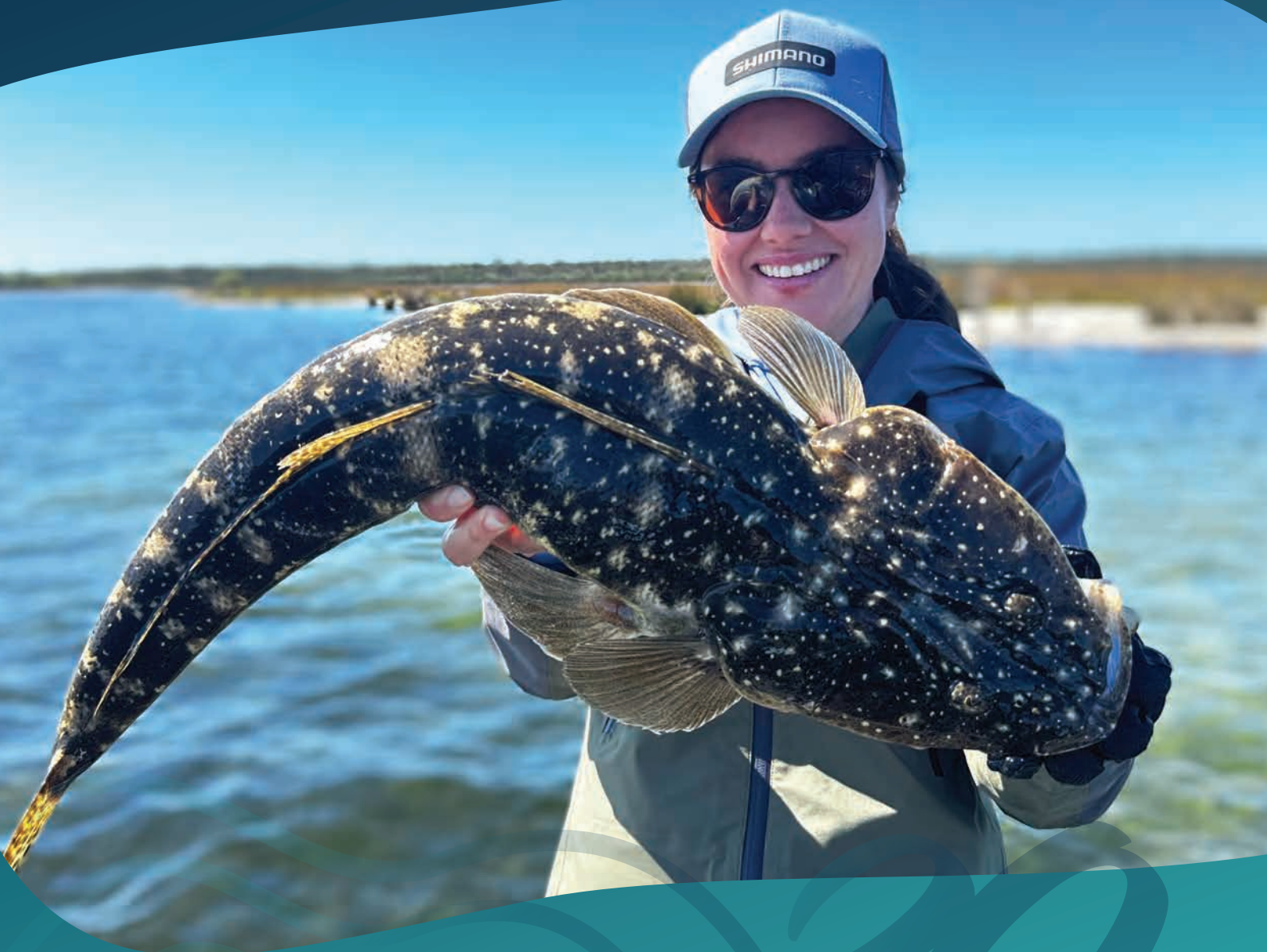




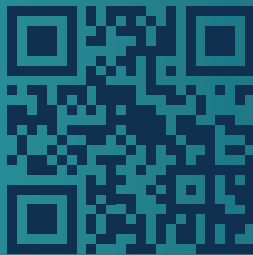
Annual Report

2024-25



30
years

Let's Make Fishing Better, For Everyone!



Visit our website to learn
more about how we're making
fishing better for everyone.

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30
years

Chairman's Report

As the Chair of VRFish, the government recognised independent recreational fishing peak body of Victoria that represents an estimated one million plus recreational fishers, it is with pleasure to promote VRFish has now passed a milestone of excellent representation and achieved so many great outcomes for recreational fishers over a period of thirty years.

Recognition must note that VRFish has always been a user paid recreational fishing peak body funded by recreational fishing licence funds. To comply with this, we have implemented prudent deliverables and reporting requirements to ensure VRFish continues to be financially and risk management expedient within the scope of our Ministerial approved funding agreements.

The Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee are central in promoting compliance within budgets, auditing, and risk management deliverables and reporting back to the Board to ensure our peak body remains viable.

As the Chair of VRFish and all Board Members it is extremely gratifying to pass on my thanks to this committee for all their diligence and outputs for Board approval throughout the year.

The Board

I must extend my sincere thanks to all Board members who are realistically volunteers for their commitment in promoting expedient management principles and supported outcomes during what can often be complex issues.

Issues that may be political, financial, internal management or linked to recreational fishing management and specific suggested actions promoted by our statewide membership and the general fishing public.

Due to these diverse range of issues associated with our peak body, it is extremely important that VRFish continues to review our policies for reference so considered outcomes and decision making at Board level can occur.

Currently our policies developed by VRFish members are available on our website that is open to the public and available for all members to observe.

Of particular importance, it is relevant to note that our gender equity Board continues to function very well, and it is pleasing to have a valued cross section of expertise that includes valuable multi-culture representation.

The Board also have two appointed representatives to provide advice on issues linked to First Nation People and the ever-increasing multi-culture recreational fishers.

VRFish Staff

As a statewide organisation that must represent an estimated

one million plus Victorians that go fishing every year the task of our Executive Officer Ben Scullin continues to be never ending, especially when one must be available on short notice and weekends.

Ben is an experienced advocate that always maintains promoting the best outcomes for recreational fishing and most importantly complies with our vision of "making recreational fishing better for everyone".

Our Communications Manager Holly Amos continues to maintain excellent communications outputs that are second to no other organisation I can currently name in Victoria.

Our Company Secretary and Operations Manager, Amanda Szabo continues to provide internal and external requirements, and valued linkage within our management and VRFish and members.

VRFish Funding Agreement

Our current three-year funding agreement approved and signed by the Hon Minister Sonia Kilkenny has one more calendar year remaining and expires on the 30th June 2026.

**Rob Loats**

Chairman

VRFish will be consulting with the Hon Steve Dimopoulos Minister for Environment, Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Outdoor Recreation and Victorian Fisheries Authority staff for a new funding agreement to ensure the future of our recognised recreational fishing peak body receives adequate funding for the future and importantly is allocated in a timely manner.

VRFish Members

Our expanding membership clearly identifies our peak body representing Victorian recreational fishers continues to gain momentum.

With any Victoria wide organisation strength and unity are the corner stone of success for the Board and Executive Officer to provide valuable defined information back to the Government, government agencies, authorities, and other organisations linked to our goals of “making recreational fishing better, for everyone”.

As the current Chair of VRFish on behalf of the Board I must extend our gratitude to all our members and the recreational fishing public for their support and most importantly their valued volunteer

input and advice contributed throughout the year.

The benefits of your volunteer advice and on ground action if costed in dollar terms would clearly be astronomical.

Proposed Reductions to Frontline Fisheries Officers

VRFish, as the states recognised recreational fishing peak body for thirty years, has always supported maintaining the current highly valued fisheries officers to ensure recreational fishing opportunities have protection from organised crime and illegal activities.

Most importantly to also ensure a prominent level of compliance with recreational fishing regulations remain to ensure our wild and stocked fish and linked valuable marine and freshwater resources remain protected for future generations to enjoy.

To verify our policy was currently valid, our VRFish communications team promoted a statewide recreational fisher priorities survey for public comment that received an amazing 2,054 replies within a seven-day cycle. Outcomes clearly reinforced our current long-term policy validation.

VRFish forwarded a copy of the detailed survey results to Minister Dimopoulos for information to assist with his decision making.

Of extreme disappointment to the Board, our membership, and the general recreational fishing public is the significant reduction to the states experienced frontline Fisheries Officers received approval with only minor changes.

VRFish Policy

It is particularly important to note as the states recognised independent recreational fishing peak body representing all recreational fishers in Victoria, we currently reserve the right to oppose or support any changes that may affect recreational fishing outcomes that align with our current policies.

It is fair to say, to do otherwise it would be impossible to represent the expectations or long-term aspirations of our volunteer members and very importantly the state's general and highly valued recreational fishing public.

Our goals are always to reach outcomes by taking a reasonable contemporary consultative approach. Depending on each situation, it is reasonable to expect

Chairman's Report

that we will question specific issues as they arise, seek changes, and always address issues in a non-political manner.

VRFish Advocacy and Outcomes

In general, history will identify VRFish has and continues to achieve exponent outcomes for recreational fishers and within the scope of our currently available funding and staffing capacity.

It is patently obvious and comes as no surprise that our hard-earned achievements over three decades with limited staff, is truly a magnificent example that identifies what a huge dedicated recreational fisher volunteer membership can achieve.

Our First Nation People

VRFish clearly recognise the heritage, culture, and contribution of our nations first people, and to give practical support to the issue of indigenous reconciliation through recreational fishing.

VRFish was privileged to assist the development of one indigenous fishing club and have the existing fishing club join our peak body as members.

Over the past year our Executive Officer has obtained grants and assisted both clubs hold successful fishing events that included an important indigenous female fishing event.

Currently there is more interest in developing new indigenous fishing clubs and we welcome assisting these fishers as required.

It is abundantly clear their interests in access, the environment, our waterways, wetlands, rivers, and lakes while enjoying recreational fishing is remarkably like our expectations.

Government Funding for Recreational Fishing

VRFish applauds the current Labor governments support in allocating millions of dollars to grow recreational fishing in Victoria that has clearly provided excellent benefits for the recreational fishing public and associated business and industry.

As Victoria's recognised recreational fishing peak body we will continue to promote that recreational fishing is contributing direct and indirect value of \$7.51 billion dollars to Victoria and supports 27,300 Victorians in employment.

This recognition clearly identifies recreational fishing is a major sport exponentially linked to Victoria's economy.

VRFish will be consulting with our members and the wider fishing community and promoting a necessary state-wide survey over the coming year for their consideration and input.

We will be requesting potential projects that you suggest will continue to grow and improve recreational fishing as the state's best outdoor sport that also includes family and social economic and community wellbeing benefits.

These ideas will be prioritised and collated to form a consolidated request, promoted in person to each political party and forwarded to all political parties leading up to the next Victorian election for their considerations.

In closing, thank you once again for your input and support throughout the year and please take care while enjoying the recreational fishing activity of your choice.

Rob Loats

Chairman

30
years

Rob Loats, Arcadia Native
Fish Hatchery.



Executive Officer's Report

Reflecting on a Year of Progress, Transition, and Celebration for VRFish.

As we close the 2024/25 financial year, it is my privilege to present this Executive Officer's Report, summarizing our achievements, priorities, and challenges. This year has been marked by significant progress across all our strategic pillars – habitat, water, access, promotion, support, best practice, and organisational excellence.

At the time of writing, we also acknowledge the resignation of our Executive Officer, Ben Scullin. On behalf of VRFish, I wish to extend our deepest gratitude to Ben for his outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing recreational fishing in Victoria. His vision and efforts have left a lasting positive impact on our community and organisation. As you review this EO's report make no mistake that the outcomes and advocacy discussed didn't come under my watch, this was very much on the back of Ben's dedication to making recreational fishing better in Victoria.

Notably, 2024/25 also marks VRFish's 30th year as Victoria's independent recreational fishing peak body—a milestone that celebrates three decades of dedication to championing recreational fishing and strengthening the Victorian fishing community.

We are pleased to report that the organisation has maintained a solid financial base in the last financial year via prudent spending oversight from our Finance, Audit and Risk committee chaired by Steven Relf. It is now some years since the review of VRFish and our restructured Board, led by Rob Loats, continues to assure a high level of governance and leadership for VRFish.

Furthermore, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge our back of house operations that keep VRFish ticking. Our Operations Manager Amanda Szabo and Communications Manager Holly Amos continue to underpin VRFish. Whilst my tenure has been short, I've been impressed with their commitment, flexibility and professionalism.

Our vision remains steadfast: to make fishing better, for everyone. In 2024/25, VRFish continued to lead advocacy for investment in habitat, promoted the importance of recreational water allocations, and supported our members and recreational fishers in initiatives to enhance our fishing experiences.

VRFish is proud to champion increased participation and support for our members. This year, we hosted the inaugural

Leaders in Advocacy Program, engaged youth through the Lure Learning Program, supported the Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club's successful Women in Fishing Day at Arcadia and achieved record new member sign-ups.

VRFish, Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria, VRFish Dive Fisheries Reference Group members and two nominated recreational fishing representatives all worked hard to provide input into the Rock Lobster Management Plan and rock lobster fishery management objectives which resulted in a positive outcome for recreational fishers and divers as acceptable quota and catch limits were maintained.

This year, we also faced arguably one of the biggest advocacy challenges in VRFish's 30-year history – the mass reduction of fisheries officers. This decision has a direct impact on our fisheries and was not supported by recreational fishers. VRFish voiced concerns about the impact the reduction of fisheries officers would have on our fisheries and the enforcement of fishing regulations. VRFish remains of the view that fisheries officers are essential to ensure the sustainability of the sector.



Scott Jefferis

VRFish Interim EO

As noted, this year marks a transition in our leadership team. Ben Scullin's resignation as Executive Officer is a significant moment for VRFish. We thank Ben for his remarkable dedication, strategic vision, and the many contributions he has made during his tenure. Ben's leadership has been instrumental in driving advocacy, fostering partnerships, and elevating the profile of recreational fishing in Victoria. We wish him the very best in his future endeavors and are confident the foundation he has helped build will support VRFish's continued growth and success.

As we move into a state election year, VRFish is committed to maintaining a strong voice for recreational fishers and ramping up our advocacy for better fishing outcomes across Victoria. We will work to ensure that recreational fishing remains a priority for all parties and that our community's interests are strongly represented in policy discussions and decisions.

Celebrating our 30th anniversary this year has been a powerful reminder of how far VRFish has come and how much more we can achieve together. We thank everyone who has contributed

to our journey, and look forward to another decade of innovation, advocacy, and growth for fishing in Victoria.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our progress this year. Together, we will continue to make fishing better for all Victorians.

On behalf of the Executive Office

Scott Jefferis

VRFish Interim EO



Scott Jefferis
stocking freshwater
catfish at Campaspe
Weir with the VFA.

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 1,114,000 recreational fishers that injects \$2.99 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.

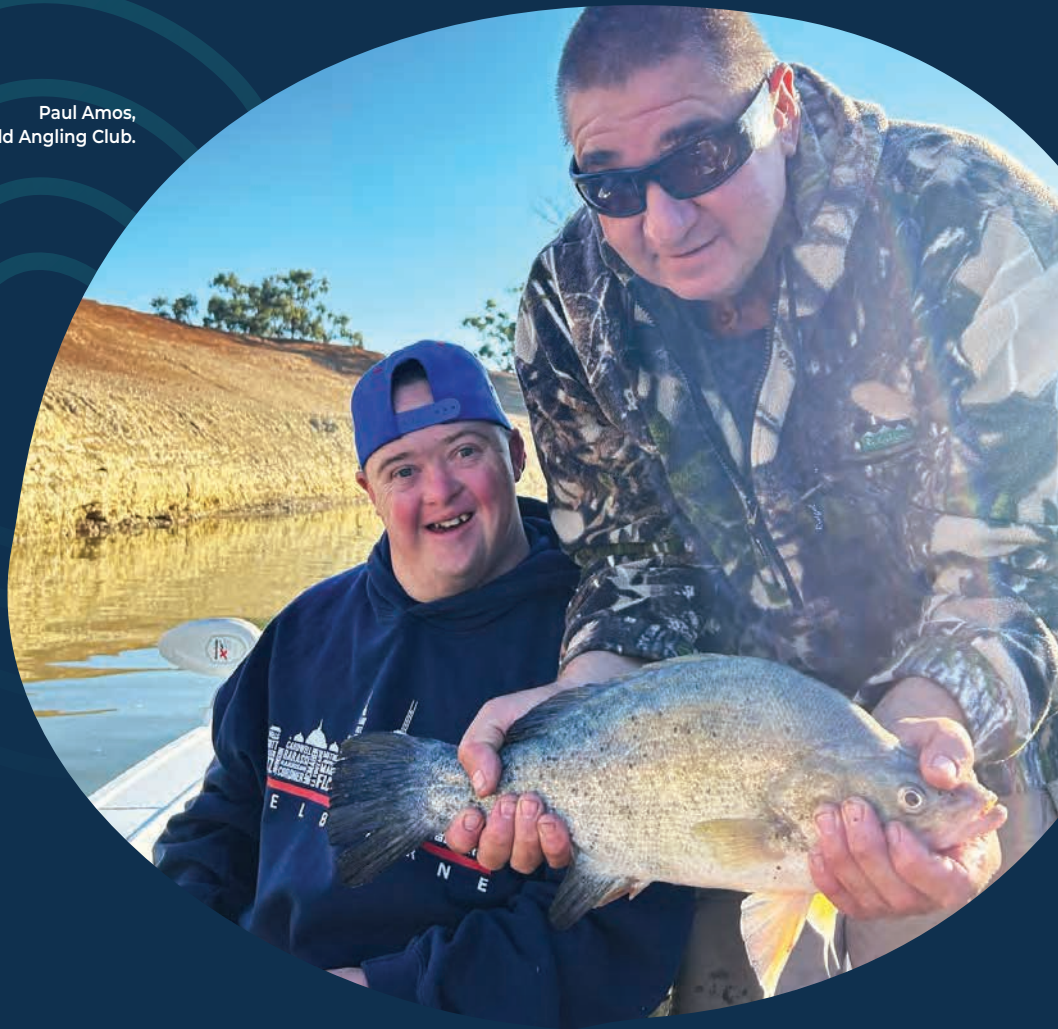
VRFish works to raise the profile of fishing as a recreational activity with significant social, cultural and economic benefits. At the same time, we are protecting our fishing lifestyle so that you can get outdoors, connect with nature, relax and enjoy quality time with your family and friends.

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.



Trevor Pillinger,
Gippsland Lakes
Fishing Club.

Paul Amos,
Donald Angling Club.



Our Priorities



Access

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



Promote

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



Habitat

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



Water

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



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.



Support

Supporting our VRFish members and empowering recreational fishers to lead advocacy issues.

Our Board Members



Rob Loats,
Chairperson

Rob is a past primary production business manager from rural Victoria.

He has extensive experience of issues associated with natural resource and water management and skills associated with finance, government and non-government state agency inputs and outputs.

Rob has provided long term representation of the Donald Angling 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 a member of the Fisheries Revenue Allocation Committee (FRAC), is a past Chairman and member of the Recreational Fishing Licence Working Group, Currently a member of the North Central Catchment Management Authority Community Leaders Group, Chair of the Northcentral CMA Native Fish Recovery Flagship Waterways Project PSC. He is a past member of the DEECA 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 29 years of voluntary water monitoring with the North Central CMA Waterwatch Program and is identified in the Victorian Waterwatch "Hall of Fame". Rob is also a current member of the Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Recreational Water Committee.

Rob has a very strong affinity in habitat protection and reinstatement, environmental and recreational water allocations, and as a past member of the National Fish Habitat Network, Murray-Darling Murray Cod Taskforce, Native Fish Strategy, and continues to promote the values of fish habitat and projects that protect and restore habitat in Rivers, Creeks, Wetlands and Water Storage Reservoirs, especially woody habitat.

Rob joined the VRFish Board to promote the interests of all Victorian recreational fishers and to apply his knowledge regarding strategic business directives, financial management and skills associated with responding to government policy directives to promote the best possible long-term outcomes for all recreational fishers.



Steven Relf,
Deputy Chair

Steven has a strong commitment to ensure recreational angling continues to improve for all anglers.

Steven is the Former President of the Dunlop Bayswater Angling Club and Howqua Association Angling Clubs and has been a delegate of VRFish for the last 26 years. Steven is the current deputy chair of VRFish and chair of the finance risk & audit committee.

Steven believes fishers need a strong peak body that can advocate on their behalf and provide a voice back to the Victorian Fisheries Authority and government.

As a VRFish representative Steven can give back to the sport he has enjoyed for a very long time.





Rita Caulfield

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.

Within the recreational 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.



Jingjing Nan

Jingjing Nan is the Vice President of the Victorian Chinese Angling Association and the founder of Nan International Media.

She brings extensive experience in marketing, event planning and business management to the VRFish Board, along with valuable connections in Victoria's multicultural communities.

A passionate angler and scuba diver, Jingjing has a deep love for the ocean and believes the marine world is full of wonder and opportunity. She is committed to encouraging people from diverse cultural backgrounds to explore, enjoy and protect Victoria's waterways.

As a VRFish Board member, Jingjing is dedicated to building stronger links with multicultural communities, supporting our promotional efforts, and developing engaging activities and projects that inspire participation and bring fresh energy to VRFish.



Lydia Cahill

Lydia is a highly experienced Senior Business Analyst and Project Manager contracting in the private sector.

She brings a unique set of skills spanning across Aged Care, Health Insurance, Engineering and Infrastructure, Fast Moving Consumer Goods and Information Technology.

From humble beginnings bait fishing for snapper and King George whiting, Lydia's fishing passion developed into more specialised genres and is better known as an avid topwater / lure angler. Lydia fishes across Victoria for Southern bluefin tuna, yellowtail kingfish and occasionally Murray cod. Where possible, Lydia travels to a range of Australian and international destinations primarily in the pursuit of the mighty giant trevally.

She brings to VRFish an understanding of the needs and concerns of recreational fishers, combined with industry knowledge as a brand ambassador, Tuna Champions ambassador and Women in Recreational Fishing mentor.

Passionate about infrastructure meeting the needs of fishers as well as a strong conservation and sustainable fishing mindset, Lydia's business skills will ensure that recreational fishers needs will be strongly represented.



Christine Couzens MP (L) with Lee Spyrou (R) at the Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club's Women in Fishing Day

Our Board Members



Lee Spyrou

Lee is an avid fisher and brings a wealth of experience and expertise to our organisation.

Lee has been fishing since she was a child, and her love for the sport has only grown stronger over the years. She is passionate about sustainable fishing practices and protecting our waterways for future generations. Lee's commitment to the environment and her extensive knowledge of fishing makes her a valuable addition to the VRFish board.

Lee is currently the first female president of Albert Park Yachting & Angling (est in 1909), a member of the Victorian Fisheries Authority's RFL Advisory Committee, a member of the newly established Victorian Fisheries Authority's Recreational Fishers Leaders forum, the Chair of the Port Phillip Shellfish Reef Rebuild Coalition, and a WIRFAB ambassador.



Scott Jefferis

Appointed to the VRFish Board in 2024, Scott is the Vice President of the Dunlop Bayswater Angling Club and the Secretary/Treasurer of Howqua Angling Clubs Association.

A lifelong fisho, Scott enjoys fishing in the Murray between Gunbower and Swan Hill, Lake Eppalock and Lake Eildon. Scott says, "Fishing has always been a family affair for me and I have fond memories of my grandparents and father taking me fishing and now enjoy fishing with my daughters". More recently, his family have been chasing the elusive metre Murray cod in Yarrawonga.

He has over 20 years' experience working in the IT industry including ten years as a business owner/partner and four years as founder/director where he has developed a high level of understanding of IT and cyber security, financial management, human resources and vendor management.

Scott is highly involved in his local community including more than seven years as School Council President where he worked with the education department, local council and politicians. And, more than thirteen years in various roles, including Vice President and Secretary, at his local cricket club where he has played a key role in community consultation.

Scott has greatly enjoyed being a part of the Dunlop Bayswater Angling Club and is keen to contribute to VRFish through supporting the success of other fishing clubs.



John Spragg

Term commenced –
November 2024

John has spent the last 50 years fishing both fresh and saltwater.

He enjoys giving back to the sport and pastime he has loved for so long. He is passionate about the sustainability of our fish stocks, and he wants to see his grandkids have the opportunity to catch fish as he has.

Now retired, John was the President of Bellingham-Marine for Australasia and Middle East – the global leader in design, manufacture and construction of floating marinas and related floating facilities. He was also Vice-Chairman or member of the Maina Industries of Australia for around 25 years.

John is currently Senior Vice-President of the Victorian Fly Fishers Association (VFFA) and on the committee for Albert Park Yachting & Angling Club (APYAC). John was instrumental in changing the way APYAC measure fish for competitions to ensure they can be released back into the water.

John brings to VRFish experience in management, dispute resolution, a passion for sustainability in fishing and a love of fishing both fresh and saltwater.



Cody McLeod

Term commenced –
November 2024

Cody's passion for recreational fishing and marine conservation was a driving factor in his decision to join the VRFish Board.

Cody is passionate about giving back to recreational fishing and is deeply committed to environmental sustainability, particularly in the context of marine ecosystems. As a board member of the Reef Reconstruction Coalition, Cody has been actively involved in efforts to restore declining local oyster beds and reef systems in Port Phillip Bay.

Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Melbourne, Cody brings to the VRFish Board experience in financial analysis and business growth strategies, recently leading the expansion of an e-commerce platform into US and Australian markets. He also has experience with underwater drone reef mapping, securing funding and managing complex environmental projects.

A member of Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club (APYAC), Cody has been mentored by founding VRFish board member, Bob Pearce. Cody will bring a fresh energy and a young leaders perspective to the board.



Neville Dance

Term concluded –
November 2024

VRFish Members



Fishing Clubs

- Albert Park Yachting & Angling Club
- Altona Boating Angling Club
- Anderson Inlet Angling Club Inverloch Inc
- Bairnsdale Flyfishers Club Inc
- Bairnsdale RSL Fishing Club
- Ballarat Fly Fishers Club
- Balmoral & District Angling Club
- Barham Angling Club
- Baringhup Cairn Curran Native Fishing Club
- Bass Strait Game Fishing Club Inc
- 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
- Blue Rock Angling Club
- Brunswick City Anglers Club
- Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club Inc
- Camperdown Angling Club Inc
- Castlemaine District Fish Protection Society & Anglers Club
- Casterton Angling Society Inc
- Central Vic Lure Casters Inc
- Charlton Angling Club Inc
- Clayton RSL Angling Club
- Clunes Angling Club
- Cobden Angling Club Inc
- Corinella Boating & Angling Club
- Corio Bay Anglers Club
- Craigieburn Angling Club Inc
- Dandenong Club Sports Fishing Clubs
- Dangers Fishing Club Inc
- Dartmoor Angling Club
- Derrinallum Anglers Club
- Didyabringyarodalong Angling Club Inc
- Donald Angling Club
- Dungula Maniga Banga Inc
- Dunlop Bayswater Angling Club
- Elwood Angling Club
- Essendon Fish Protection Society & Anglers Club
- Fairfield & Alphington Fish Protection Society & Anglers Club Inc

- Geelong & District Anglers Club & Fish Protection Society
- Geelong & District Casting Club
- Geelong Freedivers Inc
- Geelong Gun & Rod Association Inc
- Geelong Western Beach Fishing Club
- Gippsland Lakes Fishing Club
- Greensborough & District Angling Club
- Greenvale Sport & Game Fishing Club
- Hamilton Anglers Club
- Hampton Park Angling Club
- Healesville Angling & Fish Protection Society Inc
- Hobsons Bay Sport & Game Fishing Club Inc
- Horsham Angling Club Inc
- Inverloch Fishing Club Inc
- Jingellic-Walwa Fishing Club
- Keysborough Angling Club
- Kiewa Valley Fishing Club
- King River & District Fishing Club
- Knox Boat Fishing Club
- Knox Club Sportfishing Club
- Koroit & District Angling Club Inc
- 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
- Leitchville Bunyips Sporting Club Inc
- Leongatha Angling Club Inc
- Leopold Angling & Aquatic Club
- Loch Sport Fishing Association Inc
- Longwarry Angling Club Inc
- Lorne Aquatic & Angling Club
- Lowhead Road Fishing Club Inc
- Loy Yang Recreational Angling Club Inc
- Maffra & District Angling Club
- Maldon Angling & Outdoors Club Inc
- Maryborough Angling Club Inc
- McLoughlins Beach Angling Club
- 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
- Omeo Angling Club
- Ormond Angling Club
- Pakenham Angling Club
- Port Albert Fishing Club Inc
- Port Campbell Boating Club
- Port Fairy Angling Club
- Portland Sport Fishing Club
- Poseidon Angling Club Inc
- Preston Northcote Angling Club
- Red Tag Flyfishers
- Ringwood & District Angling Club Inc
- Rochester & District Angling Club
- Rosebud RSL Angling Club
- Rowvillian Angling Club
- Rhyll-Phillip Island Angling Club Inc
- Sandringham Anglers Club
- Snapper Point Angling Club
- South Eastern Anglers & Toorak Angling Club
- Southern Boat Fishing Club
- Southern Fly Fishers (Aust) Inc
- Southern Peninsula Angling Club
- Springvale RSL Angling Club
- Stawell & District Angling Club Incorporated
- St Arnaud Angling Club
- Sunbury Angling Club Inc
- Sunshine Fly Casting Club
- Tatong Anglers Group
- Teams Fishing Australia
- Thorpdale & District Angling Club
- Toolamba Fishing Club Inc
- Toonalook Amateur Fishing Club
- Tooradin Angling Club
- Torquay Angling Club
- Undera Angling Club
- Upper Yarra Angling Club Inc
- Upwey Angling Club Inc
- Venus Bay Angling Club
- The Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association Inc
- 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 & Light Game Fishing Club
- Waverley & District Anglers Inc
- Welshmans Reef Water Sports Club
- Werribee & District Anglers Club

- Westernport Angling Club Inc
- Williamstown Newport Anglers 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

Fishing Associations

- Association of Geelong & District Angling Clubs Inc.
- Australian Anglers Association (Victoria)
- Australian National Sportsfishing Association (Victoria)
- Ballarat & District Anglers Association
- Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron
- Council of Victorian Fly fishing Clubs
- Game Fishing Association of Victoria
- Gippsland Lakes Recreational Fishing Alliance
- Gippsland Angling Clubs Association
- Goulburn Valley Association of Angling Clubs
- Howqua Angling Clubs Association
- Metropolitan Anglers Association
- Mid Northern Association of Angling Clubs
- Midland & North Central Angling Association
- SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria
- Victoria Chinese Angling Association Inc
- Victorian Piscatorial Council Inc

Affiliated Organisations

- Boating Industry Association of Victoria
- Dive Industry of Victoria Association (D.I.V.A)
- Fishcare Victoria
- Geelong & District Casting Club Inc
- No Netting Southwest Victorian Coast Inc
- OzFish Unlimited
- OzFish Unlimited – Bayside Chapter
- OzFish Unlimited – South West Chapter
- Professional Fishing Instructors & Guides Association
- Tangaroa Blue
- That's The Thing About Fishing Inc.
- Victorian Fishing Charter Association
- Walkerville Campers Association

Member Reports

Albert Park Yachting & Angling Club



Just after the turn of the century, ten anglers and yachtsmen in the Albert Park area decided to form a club and build a clubhouse.

Early talks were held in the old bandstand, which was located close to where the clubhouse now stands. The formal opening of APYAC, the only angling club between St. Kilda and Williamstown, took place on October 9th, 1909 and about 2000 spectators attended. The first meeting held on Thursday night, 27th March 1909, was attended by The Mayor and Councillors. For more than 100 years of the club's existence, APYAC has established itself in Victoria's heritage. It has

been home to many generations of families. The club has taught many people how to fish (many being junior anglers), supported families in distress and helped one another in times of need.

Having some 2,000 members and a waiting list to join, APYAC is probably the biggest angling club in Victoria and would be one of the biggest angling clubs in Australia. Situated on Hobsons Bay foreshore (Kerferd Road and Beaconsfield Parade), our clubrooms enjoy unparalleled views and boat access to the bay. APYAC is a long term affiliate member of the Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish) and also the Metropolitan Anglers' Association (MAA).

The club premises, houses 64 boats downstairs with gantry

access directly onto the water. Upstairs facilities include Banquet Hall, licensed Bar and Dining Facilities. Members and visitors can enjoy magnificent bay views on the balcony, while enjoying a very pleasant lunch or dinner. The club regularly runs a variety of social functions, most of which are quickly booked out.

In addition to the numerous fishing and social activities that are run for our members, APYAC also has a culture of making contributions to the community generally. Our desire to naturally rehabilitate lost shellfish reefs within Port Phillip Bay is an example of this, as the beneficiaries will be much wider than simply APYAC members. Our club has contributed over \$600,000 to the project so far.



Resident crab and mussels recruiting naturally. Photo by The Nature Conservancy.



APYAC President,
Lee Spyrou with
7.18kg Snapper.

The shellfish reef restoration project has become a \$50 Million project nationally and was initiated by APYAC. This is an initiative that the club will always be proud of. Numerous other examples could be given about our club's community service ethos, one in particular being our campaign to save the Kerferd Road Pier. Due to rotting timbers, the pier was condemned some years ago (circa 1980) and was going to be dismantled. The club ran a

(successful) campaign to restore the pier and we raised substantial funds to contribute towards the costs of its reinstatement.

APYAC is proud of the fact that we have, to a great extent, 'de-bloked.' Many of our club leaders are women and some of our keenest anglers are also women. We have benefited greatly from encouraging our female members to become involved in both the fishing and the running of the club.

We are active with Women in Recreational Fishing (WIRF), junior fishing and with local schools, where we recently donated a clinker boat for restoration by woodwork students. More community service projects are also being planned by the club.

Bob Pearce

Member Reports

Beaumaris Motor
Yacht Squadron's Caz
and Mitchell Bell.



Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron

The past year has been another busy, but very rewarding year at the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron (BMYS) which included a diverse range of fishing competitions, boating events, social functions and OH&S lectures and training.

Our aim at the BMYS is to be the Premier Trailer Boat Club on Port Philip Bay and strive to be a club that is inclusive, encouraging junior and family fishing, providing a safe and enjoyable environment that fosters healthy club participation.

Several fishing competitions were run this year with the biggest event being our Gala Fishing Competition which had over 100 boats launched from BMYS with guests from Norwood Angling Club, Knox Sports Club Fishing Club, Orbest Angling Club and Albury Wodonga Fishing Club all enjoying the weekend. The Sunday had 220 people for the lunch and presentations with guest Peter 'Fergy' Ferguson spending time with all our juniors and Craig Cox and Gawaine Blake chipping in.

Our Club's Family Fishing Day was another great success with the focus on developing family and

junior fishing a priority. Seeing the juniors get involved together with the wives and partners of Members was a real highlight for me.

BMYS is blessed to have some first class junior fishos and we will certainly continue to focus on ways to keep them involved.

Congratulations to all our juniors this year!

Other great club events included trips to Port Welshpool, Orbest, Phillip Island and other local events run from the Club.

Notably, the Club Boating Committee ran a log trail and a trip to Lake Eildon which was well attended by families with biscuits and wakeboards for the kids to enjoy.

We are mindful not to take for granted how blessed the BMYS is for having a prime location on the Bay and our first-class club facilities.

Our Community

A part of our club's vision is to genuinely and intentionally value our local community and helping them discover and enjoy all the benefits that our club has to offer.

We work closely with the following groups and authorities:

- The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) and Vic Water Police have priority access to our club ramps

- Able Australia (AA) run Able Day from BMYS where Club Members take AA Patients out on the Bay in their boats for a run and fun! A real highlight!
- Our local Beaumaris RSL
- Local charities, churches and care organisations
- We work closely with our local environmental and fossil groups to help protect Beaumaris Bay, where our club is situated, the most significant fossil area of its type in Australia
- As a tribute to this valuable resource we are currently building a special display which will highlight the importance of protecting this resource

Safety

Getting our members on and off the water safely is of high priority for our Club. During the year we regularly run training courses in VHF Radio usage, Boat and PWC Licensing, Fire and Flare training, Health, including Defib instruction training, and First Aid.

Interestingly, a lot of Member's Partners and Juniors took up these courses during the year which shows that our Family and Junior development programs are growing beyond expectation.



Peter 'Fergy' Ferguson at BMYS family fishing day.

We hope to further expand our training and safety this coming year.

The Club's Social Committee was very busy at Christmas with a family Christmas day and a visit from Santa with gifts for all the kids. It was a joy to see all the kids' faces. This was followed by Christmas Carols at night for all to attend with many locals joining in. A wonderful way to see the year out.

BMYS Jetty 1 (the main public Jetty) has been a productive platform and forms part of our lease and lease agreement. We have just completed the repairs to all the pylons ensuring it will continue to be safe for many years to come.

All the funds came directly from the Club, notably, at significant cost, but we now have a very good public amenity that will be there for an additional 30 years before any further works will be required.

As a proud and Founding Member of VRFish, BMYS is committed to the VRFish Cause and look forward to collaborating closely with Ben and all the team at VRFish in the coming years.

Steve Lopes

Ballarat Fly Fishers Club Inc

As Ballarat Fly Fishers Club Inc. enters its 106th year, membership is reaching 200 amongst an exciting and busy schedule.

Members are heavily involved with advocating for recreational fishing and stocking consultation with VFA through VRFish, Ballarat and District Angling Association and Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs. Consultation includes angler access through installation of styles on local reservoirs and creeks, stocking of Central Highland waters and riparian revegetation and recovery. Our clubrooms host community consultation meetings chaired by Victorian Fisheries Authority and City of Ballarat.

Regular club competitions include The Wastell Trophy in October and the Two-fly in March which are open to all fly fishers even if not affiliated with a club. Tom Jarman once more represented Australia as Team Captain at the 2025 World Championships. He will be hosting a series of twilight Friday social competitions over the warmer months for both shore and boat-based section on Lake Wendouree.

Our fly casters continue to excel with Mark Cuthbert enjoying a stella year including Victorian Casting Champion. Our casters can be found at the T-Jetty on Eastern side of Lake Wendouree most Sunday mornings. Newcomers are welcome to introduce themselves for the opportunity of some free casting instruction from members recognised as former Australian Champions and qualified instructors.

The first Saturday of September annually finds BFFC active with other local fishing clubs as members of the BDAA supporting the Victorian Fisheries Authority's Fishing Festival on Windmill Drive, Lake Wendouree. The following Saturday BFFC run a Learn to Fly Fish Workshop. This workshop is followed by an intermediate workshop for new members in April each year to consolidate skills.

Information including club meetings and contacts can be found on the club website: www.ballaratflyfishers.org

Bill Reddick



Member Reports



Midland and North Central Angling Association

The executive members of Midland and North Central Angling Association Incorporated (M&NCAA) have been working hard to help strengthen angling clubs which have persistent problems with stagnating involvement in club activities.

Most clubs in our region have issues with declining attendances at meetings and events, reluctance to take up leadership positions or help out with implementing activities for the benefit of the club and recreational fishing. M&NCAA is a foundation member of VRFish, which is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, and strongly supports the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), VRFish, OzFish Unlimited and the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) by contributing volunteer hours towards policy development and implementation of policies and projects for the benefit of Victoria's recreational fishery.

The VFA's 2023 program to educate and promote diversity and inclusion in recreational fishing was a valuable initiative and an opportunity to strengthen clubs

which should have been taken up by more fishers. Efforts in 2024 by the Bendigo & District Fly Fishers (B&DFF) to introduce more women to fly fishing and to support the Mending Casts organization has brought positive change to B&DFF and M&NCAA in 2025 with more female involvement.

Three fishers from different M&NCAA clubs were selected for participation in the inaugural VRFish Leadership in Advocacy program in May. Congratulations to Jai Lygon, Zac Yates and Sean Crombie for stepping up, your work on advocacy projects is eagerly anticipated, and to VRFish EO Ben Scullin for his initiative. Effective recreational angler advocacy is exemplified by efforts from the VRFish executive and Sean Crombie M&NCAA president towards halting the decommissioning of the Upper Teddington reservoir and its loss as a recreational fishery.

The generosity of spirit demonstrated by John Condliffe and Kyneton AC members with their efforts to introduce people to recreational fishing needs to be praised. In addition to holding multiple introductory courses to recreational fishing under the Rotary Active program, KAC have been providing event operational support and basic fishing skills instruction at "Kenny's catch of the

day events" which commenced Sep'24 with a "Come and Try day" at Lauriston reservoir.

The "Kenny's catch of the day" events aim to leverage the recognized opportunity of recreational fishing to address the mental wellbeing of participants from the Macedon Ranges community, and to equip individuals by teaching them basic fishing skills that not only offer recreational enjoyment but also serve as a therapeutic outlet.

Kyneton Angling Club (KAC) also expertly managed registrations and put on a great BBQ when hosting the Midland Shield at Lake Eppalock on 10th Nov '24. Castlemaine district Fish Protection Society & Angling Club (CDFPS&AC) won the shield for highest aggregate and Tony Crimmins B&DFF caught largest fish, a 52cm golden perch. Many thanks to M&NCAA president Sean Crombie for all of his work in management of the event, and to members of KAC, CDFPS&AC, Heathcote AC, B&DFF, Bendigo Legion Angling Club and Maryborough AC for their attendance and support.

M&NCAA's involvement with the OzFish Unlimited Campaspe Loddon chapter and Andy Foudoulis, OzFish Unlimited's senior project manager, will expand with in-water habitat

30
years

Members of the
Midland and North
Central Angling
Association.



projects being developed for the Upper Coliban Reservoir and Waranga Basin. The benefits of the 2024 timber placement into Eppalock are evident and similar advantages for the VFA stocking program are expected at Upper Coliban Reservoir.

In addition to contributing to VRFish and VFA forums, M&NCAA's VRFish delegates have been contributing to the project reference group for the NCCMA's

Tullaroop Catchment Restoration Project. Habitat for river blackfish and platypus has been installed as planned in the Bullarook and Tullaroop creeks and more riparian revegetation to replace willows will be planted later this year. Steps to mitigate cyanobacteria blooms and reduce water treatment costs in Tullaroop Dam remain to be implemented.

The water quality in the Deep creek and Loddon River downstream of Cairn Curran Reservoir to Laanecoorie Weir should be of concern to all Victorians.

Greg Hellsten



Tony Crimmins with
52cm golden perch.



About Us

VRFish is the Peak Body representing recreational fishers in Victoria with a commitment to provide better recreational fishing experiences for all Victorians.

To do this, we provide opportunities for all Victorian recreational fishers to contribute their views and opinions through surveys, face to face engagement, email, phone, social media and working groups. Their broad and diverse input helps to shape our strategy and advocacy priorities that benefit all recreational fishers.

Some of this work is done through, and together with our members. Our membership comprises of individuals, recreational fishing associations, fishing clubs and affiliated organisations that share the love of recreational fishing and are united in a collective pursuit to make fishing better for current and future generations.

We also engage with a wide network of collaborative partnerships at a state and national level with individuals, organisations and community members who share our values and objectives for recreational fishing.

Our Vision

To make fishing better, for everyone!

Our Mission

VRFish works to make fishing better through leadership in advocacy, policy development and fisher participation.

We work towards making fishing better by:

- Protecting our fishing future
- Enhancing our fishing experiences
- Leading and innovating

Our Values

- **Respect for People:** we value our people and their diversity, knowledge and experiences
- **Innovative:** we are willing to try new things in our pursuit of excellence
- **Integrity:** we are accountable, honest, ethical and genuine; we celebrate the good things we do and learn from our setbacks
- **Evidence-based:** we critically consider all the available evidence and data in developing our policy
- **Passion:** our love of fishing drives us to be persistent and tenacious in our vision to make fishing better

Our Guiding Principles

- Maintaining recreational fisher's social license to operate
- Represent more recreational fishers
- Meeting the growing needs and aspirations of recreational fishers
- Involve and reflect the diversity of fishers
- Increase the incidence of Government's decision and policy making being informed by expertise-based and broad public opinion
- Improve the quality of information available for recreational fishers

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028

30
years



Communication & Engagement

1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025



Social Media

Instagram



Followers
3,198

Tags
3,959

Facebook



Followers
13,675

Impressions
1,018,820

Engaged Users
35,737

Reach
1,137,942

X



Followers
1,208

Email



Subscribers
54,590

Threads



Followers
421

VRFish featured in the media more than 76 times during 2024/25.

VRFish Member,
Bright Wright.



Website

Page views

149,810

Users

70,706

Articles published

74



Surveys

2,054

recreational fishers had their say in the VRFish
Recreational Fisher Priorities Survey.



Top News Articles

1. Update on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Proposed Organisational Reform
2. Helping trout in hot water
3. Returning access to public land
4. VRFish casts line to Minister: Halt proposed reforms
5. Get ready for Murray cray season

Celebrating 30 Years of VRFish

Established in 1995, VRFish is the recognised, independent peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria.

For 30 years, VRFish has been advocating to make recreational fishing better as the in Victoria. Whether it's fish habitat, water security, fishing access and infrastructure or best practice, VRFish work in partnership to make sure Victoria's fishing experiences continue to improve, be sustainable and are more enjoyable for all generations of Victorians.

As the voice of recreational fishing in Victoria, VRFish participates in a vast number of working groups, reference groups and various formal and informal arrangements to ensure that recreational fishing needs are considered as part of any government and community activity that has the opportunity to influence recreational fishing. This can range from involvement at a local level all the way through to advocacy at a federal level.

Though we employ a small team of staff, it's our dedicated volunteer members who are working tirelessly on the ground and achieving great things for recreational fishers. The following examples highlight some of the achieved outcomes and the impact VRFish has had on the recreational fishing sector in Victoria.

30 Years of VRFish Achievements

- Strongly promoted an allocation of water for Lake Toolondo following the completion of the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline.
- Strongly instigated and supported having twelve recreational water bodies to be allocated with high security of recreational water supply from water savings with the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline Project.
- Supported defined environmental water allocations from savings from the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline Project.
- In partnership with Environment Victoria successfully instigated the delivery of environmental water transferred from the management of Water Authorities to CMA's.
- Provided strong promotion for the return of water to the Snowy River and restocking the river with native fish.
- Instigated in having Lakes Boga and Kangaroo to be the first lakes in Victoria to receive woody habitat for native fish protection.
- Instigator for an innovative felled timber program with VicRoads to use woody habitat as habitat offsets in waterways and lakes reservoirs during road and freeway constructions.
- Strongly supported the Albert Park Angling and Yachting Club for the expansion of the Port Phillip Bay Living Shellfish Restoration Program.
- Instigated a program to place offshore and inshore artificial reefs in the marine environment.
- Funding to improve fish habitats in rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs.
- Strong advocacy in protecting our rights to camp and have campfires through consultation with Parks Victoria on the River Redgum Park Management Plan.
- Strongly promoted new boat ramps in Gunbower Creek.

- Obtained federal funds for the Long Jetty, Port Welshpool.
- VRFish completed the first survey of boat ramps across Victoria in 2005.
- Successfully advocated for “once in a generation” reforms to boating infrastructure governance and hypothecated funding model from boating licences, registrations, and fees.
- Advocated for major investment and upgrades in Warrnambool to create a safe harbour for recreational fishers and boaters.
- Successful on-water access campaign for Tullaroop reservoir and on-water access to other reservoirs in the Bendigo and Kyneton area.
- VRFish recommended the introduction of the all-water recreational fishing licence.

The subsequent Recreational Licence Fishing Trust Fund has enabled Victorian recreational fishers to re-invest their licence fees projects that improve fishing.

- Strongly assisted recreational fishers to have Portland Bay excluded from commercial fishing.
- Successfully prevented the Commercial Longline Fishers in Port Phillip Bay from increasing their permitted fin fish by-catch take and potentially targeting by-catch as an increased legal take.
- Instigated and achieved the return of recreational fishers to Lake Banimboola (Dartmouth).
- Instigated and promoted to the VFA for year-round fishing for Murray Cod in the lakes in the Wimmera and Milcent Basins, this includes Rocklands Reservoir, Lakes Taylors,

Charlegrark, Bellfield and Boorooopki Swamp.

- Instigated and promoted to the VFA for year-round Murray Cod fishing in Lake Eildon, Eppalock, Nillacootie and Cairn Curran Reservoir.
- Strongly involved in the delivery and implementation of the Tuna Champions stewardship program in Victoria.
- Strong advocacy to introduce slot limits with Murray Cod.
- Instigated listing Murray Cod as priority species to ensure increased penalties with organised crime, poaching and illegal activities listed in the Fisheries Act.
- Instigated the removal of opera house nets.
- Instigated the removal of setlines in the Murray River.

VRFish State Council
in 2002.



Celebrating 30 Years of VRFish

- Worked strongly in partnership with the North Central CMA with their Native Fish Recovery Plan, which included the first working fish screen in the Murray Darling Basin and the construction of new fishways.
- Strongly promoted metropolitan fish stocking program to create fishing opportunities for Victorian families.
- Prime mover of stopping scallop dredging in Port Phillip Bay.
- Stopped a strong well-resourced campaign from banning fishing for Mako sharks.
- Promoted strong advocacy to prevent the expanding of Marine Parks based on false science.
- Stopped commercial netting in estuaries and supported buyout of commercial fishers in Port Phillip Bay.
- Instigated the compulsory buyout of commercial netting licences in the Gippsland Lakes.
- Instigated the buyout of Inland Commercial Freshwater Fishers and returning twenty-eight inland lakes back to recreational fishing only.
- Instigated the ban and use of mesh nets in Schedule 8 waters by amateur fishers.
- Successful campaign to have Kerang, Boga, Reedy, Charm, Green and Cooper lakes stocked with native fish, including selected lakes stocked with yearling Murray Cod following the buyout of inland Commercial Freshwater Fishers.
- Successful instigator for a new purpose-built Native Fish Hatchery in Northern Victoria to prevent the reliance of commercial fish hatcheries in NSW.
- Instigated stocking Murray Cod and native fish in Rocklands Reservoir and strongly supporting the stocking of one million Murray Cod in Eildon Reservoir.
- Advocating for the introduction of funding grants to assist fishing clubs.
- Consulted with the Minister responsible for sport and recreation and received a magnificent outcome to have recreational fishing listed as a sport and VRFish as the recognised Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body. Sporting grants are now available for a multitude of fishing related sporting bodies.





VRFish Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients (L-R) Bob Pearce, Steven Relf, Christine Couzens MP, John Hotchin, Priya Cardinaletti, Geoff Cramer, Rob Loats.

VRFish 30th Anniversary State Forum

On 26th July 2025, VRFish celebrated our 30th anniversary with a state forum in Geelong with more than 80 delegates, who represent thousands of Victorian recreational fishers through their respective fishing clubs, associations and organisations.

During the celebration, VRFish awarded eight lifetime achievement awards to volunteers for their highly regarded service to recreational fishing in Victoria.

The VRFish Lifetime Achievement Award is the highest honour which can be bestowed by the peak body for longstanding and valued service to recreational fishing in Victoria.

Christine Couzens MP, State Member for Geelong, presented eight Lifetime Achievement Awards to our volunteers.

The award recipients included Bob Pearce (Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club), Priya Cardinaletti (Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria), Robert Loats, Geoff Cramer (Ballarat and District Anglers Association), Steven Relf and John Hotchin (Association of Geelong and District Angling Clubs).

Pat Washington and Franz Grasser were recognised for their incredible service to recreational fishing posthumously.

Collectively, our eight recipients have contributed more than 200 years of volunteer service at the highest level of recreational fishing advocacy.

For 30 years, our volunteers have been the backbone of VRFish. Through their immense passion and drive, they have worked tirelessly to give back countless hours to the sport they love.

Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, Pat Washington



Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, Franz Grasser.

Recreational Fisher Priorities Survey

In March 2025, VRFish surveyed 2,054 recreational fishers to understand the areas of the recreational fishing sector that are most important to Victorian recreational fishers.

The survey results were used to inform VRFish's report to the Minister for Outdoor Recreation regarding the Victorian Fisheries Authority's proposal to mass retrench Fisheries Officers.

Across five questions, respondents were asked to identify how important areas within the recreational fishing sector are to them. The following table shows all of the activities listed within these questions ranked by their weighted average.

Recreational Fishing Activities Ranked by Importance

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Enforcement of fishing rules | =15. Investing in Fishcare Victoria which delivers responsible fishing education and events to the community. |
| 2. Investing in fisheries enforcement and education including Fisheries Officers. | 16. Fishing events for children ie. 'Vic Fish Kids' fishing clinics. |
| 3. Visibility of Fisheries Officers | 17. All-abilities fishing clinics. |
| 4. Imposing of tougher penalties on those that break the law | 18. Investing in our fishing clubs via stronger fishing club grants. |
| =5. Educate fishers on fishing rules and regulations | 19. Investing in community engagement events and programs. |
| =5. Increased monitoring of recreational fish species. | 20. Community forums presented by the Victorian Fisheries Authority in 12 locations across Victoria. |
| 6. Increased fisheries research to understand the sustainability of our fish stocks. | 21. Promoting fishing to primary school students via providing the Little Angler Kits to children. |
| 7. Recovery of threatened fish species through programs such as Cracking the Code on Macquarie Perch. | 22. Community engagement through fishing festivals eg. 'Hooked On' events; Arcadia and Snobs Creek hatchery open days; Ballarat and Goulburn trout season opening events. |
| 8. Investing in projects that improve recreational fishing eg. increased access and improved facilities, installation of fish habitat. | 23. Leadership programs for young leaders, women and CALD communities. |
| 9. Review of bag and size limits | 24. Investment in WIRFAB leadership program to increase women's participation in fishing. |
| 10. Investing in VRFish, the peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria. VRFish advocates on behalf of Victorian recreational fishers and provides advice to Government. | 25. Community events and clinics for WIRFAB leaders and members. |
| 11. Evaluating the success of fish stocking programs. | 26. Purchase fish from interstate to achieve fishing stocking target. |
| 12. Investing in fish stocking. | 27. Investing in fishing kits for grade 5 students. |
| 13. Continue fish stocking at current target of 10 million fish per year. | 28. Decrease the number of fish stocked annually. |
| 14. Expansion of marine and estuarine species restocking programs. | |
| =15. Increased freshwater fish stocking. | |

RECREATIONAL FISHING CODE OF CONDUCT

VR FISH 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**, 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.



VRFish Priorities

Protecting, restoring & enhancing where fish live.

Habitat and Water

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 recreational fishers know that better fish habitat delivers better fishing outcomes. VRFish continues to play a lead role in advocating for investment in fish habitat and promoting the role that all Victorian recreational fishers can play in identifying areas that require attention and leading the implementation of restoration efforts.

Across the state, there are many recreational fishing organisations, fishing clubs and volunteers that are undertaking incredible work on behalf of their fishery. VRFish has continued to promote the importance of recreational water allocations to stocked fishing lakes and the value of environmental water to recreational fishers.

2024/25 Highlights

- VRFish is a partner in the Seabed Restoration and Enhancement Project led by Offshore Biotechnologies, SeaGen Aquaculture and Parks Australia.
- Continued supporting the Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club and partners shellfish reefs construction in Port Phillip.
- VRFish assisted the VFA to release freshwater catfish into several northern Victorian waterways to help recover their populations.

- Supported South Australia's government department to raise awareness of the abalone disease outbreak in South Australian waters with Victorian fishers.
- VRFish promoted information from West Gippsland CMA to inform fishers of the benefits of e-water flows in Gippsland waterways.
- A member of the North-Central Native Fish Recovery Flagship Project Steering Committee.
- VRFish attended the Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Board Customer and Stakeholder Workshop.
- VRFish provided advice to the Victorian Fisheries Authority regarding the Water (Recreational Areas) Regulations.
- Participated in the draft Victorian Waterway Management Strategy consultation.
- VRFish participated on the Glenelg River Environmental Water Advisory Group, North Central Regional Waterway Strategy – Steering Committee, and Grampians Wimmera-Mallee Water Board Stakeholder Group.

VRFish EO Ben Scullin and State Member for Geelong, Christine Couzens MP, fishing at Arcadia.

Ensuring better access to fishing opportunities.

Access

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

A significant issue facing Victorian recreational fishers is access. 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 and its members spend countless hours advocating for access or maintaining our current level of access.

2024/25 Highlights

- VRFish consults on the Better Boating Fund including the recreational boating dredging and access program.
- Received an intermediate grant via the recreational fishing grants program for a feasibility study and facility design for an all-abilities fishing platform on the Eildon Pondage.
- Supported No Netting Port Fairy Bay, Killarney and Lady Bay and No Netting Torquay campaigns.
- Through our access survey, recreational fishers identified more than 250 public land access issues across Victoria.
- To allow fishers to report access issues as they face them, we set-up a dedicated form on the website for fishers to submit where they've been locked out.
- Raised awareness within the recreational fishing community of proposed offshore energy and windfarm projects.
- VRFish provided pre-consultation advice to the Department of Transport and Planning on the Port Management (Local Ports) Regulations.
- VRFish advocated for recreational boating access upgrades to Melton Reservoir.



VRFish Priorities

Increased participation in fishing & supporting our members.

Participation & Support

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
- Developing skilled leaders, empowering recreational fishers to advocate effectively and guiding VRFish into the future
- Growing VRFish membership and supporting our members

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.

2024/25 Highlights

- Hosted the inaugural VRFish Leaders in Advocacy Program in Geelong. Participants explored topics including leadership, modelling, conflict resolution and VRFish strategy & values
- Successfully held VRFish Lure Learning Program clinics at fishing club events and fishing expos.
- Year 11 and 12 Sport and Recreation Students from Bellarine Secondary School learnt how to fish for squid via the VRFish Lure Learning Program.

- VRFish presented at fishing club meetings to engage with our Foundation Members and Fishing Club Supporters.
- Continued to attract new VRFish members including individual adults, juniors, fishing clubs and affiliated organisations.
- The highest number of new member sign-ups in VRFish history.
- Promoted fishing club events such as come-and-try fishing clinics, fishing talk nights, and fundraisers.
- Conducted a survey of more than 2,000 fishers to determine recreational fisher preferences.
- Fishers identified more than 250 public land access issues across Victoria in our access survey.
- Following feedback from the access survey, we set-up a dedicated form on the website for fishers to submit access issues.
- Promoted Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation's Gone Fishing Day initiative and encouraged people to go fishing or participate in local events.
- Participated in Victorian Fisheries Authority's events such as their fishing and boating forums and other events.
- Attended and promoted the Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club Women in Fishing event at Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery.
- VRFish actively promoted and supported club-based initiatives for LGBTIQ+ community.

VRFish Inaugural Leadership in Advocacy Program

The inaugural VRFish Leadership in Advocacy Program was held in May 2025 in Geelong.



Leaders in Advocacy Course.

- Attended the Regional Victoria Fishing Expo's in Shepparton and Bendigo.
- Through our communications, promoted responsible recreation along our waterways.
- Attended the Didyabringyarodalong Angling Club's Christmas lunch event.
- Promoted Victorian family-friendly fishing locations and beginner tips to encourage novice fishers and youth to participate in fishing.
- Supported the Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club's Reconciliation Week Event which celebrated Indigenous culture, fishing and the environment.
- Met with our members from the Victoria Chinese Angling Association.
- Attended the Boating Industry of Victoria's Geelong Boat Show.
- Assisted the Geelong and District Angling Club in applying for and receiving \$190,000 in funding to complete urgent upgrades at their clubrooms.
- Promoted recreational fishing grants programs and supported fishing club applications.

Nine participants from across the recreational fishing landscape undertook the two-day residential program.

Over the two days, participants explored topics including leadership, modelling, conflict resolution and VRFish strategy & values led by ex-Parks Victoria executive leader Graeme Baxter. VRFish EO Ben explored VRFish Advocacy, with real world case studies on relevant legislation and policy aligned with the VRFish six advocacy pillars and discussed effective advocacy techniques.

The program gave participants a solid grounding in effective advocacy for recreational fishing and developing leaders. They left the program with an advocacy project and will be mentored by current and past VRFish Board members and our Executive Officer.

Supporting Geelong & District Anglers to Update their Clubrooms

Geelong and District Anglers Club & Fish Preservation Society Inc. (GDAC) is one of Victoria's oldest organised recreational fishing bodies. In fact, they've recently found out they may be Victoria's oldest club after finding club history dating back to May 1866.

Their clubroom in Geelong isn't quite as old, but when the roof started caving in it was time for action. Club Secretary Brian Bam stepped up and made sure the clubrooms were saved.

While VRFish only played a small part in assisting GDAC secure the funding necessary to bring their clubrooms up to spec, we are thankful that State Member for Geelong Christine Couzens MP is such a wonderful advocate for our community (and local recreational fishers).



VRFish EO Ben Scullin and GDAC Secretary Brian Bam celebrate funding success.

VRFish Priorities

Promoting best practice fisheries management and informed fishers.

Best Practice

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 lead the way 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. Central in fostering greater stewardship within our fishers is our Code of Conduct. 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.

2024/25 Highlights

- VRFish strongly advocated against the proposed organisational reform at the Victorian Fisheries Authority which saw the mass retrenchment of Fisheries Officers.
- VRFish joined forces with Victorian National Parks Association, Seafood Industry Victoria and Victorian Abalone Council to write a joint letter to the Premier opposing the Victorian Fisheries Authority reform proposal.
- VRFish consulted on the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan 2024 and sat on both the Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan steering committee and resource assessment group.
- Participated in Vic Fish Stock meetings to shape the annual fish stocking plan and priorities across Victoria.

- VRFish consulted on the Corner Inlet Fishery Management Plan – Management Advisory Committee.
- Promoted rock fishing safety through VRFish communications to encourage fishers to adopt responsible rock fishing behaviours and gain awareness of lifejacket laws at high-risk locations.
- Supported South Australia's government department to raise awareness of the abalone disease outbreak in South Australian waters with Victorian fishers.
- VRFish consulted on the Victorian Giant Crab Fishery Harvest Strategy, FRDC Victorian Research Advisory Committee and RecFishing Research Steering Committee.
- Provided advice to the federal government regarding the carp virus.
- Promotion of Fisheries Notices that are in place to ensure awareness and compliance amongst the recreational fishing community.
- VRFish addressed the 2025 National Seafood Industry Leadership Program.
- Consulted on the Seafood Industry Australia: Futures of Seafood Vic Jurisdictional Committee.
- VRFish and our members were involved in both commonwealth and state fisheries management, with some important submissions and membership of numerous fisheries management processes.



- VRFish is a member of the Play It Safe by the Water committee and promotes water safety through our communications.
- Promoted boating safety through VRFish communications to encourage fishers to adopt responsible boating behaviours when spending time on the water.
- Promoted best practice handling techniques through the Care for Cod and Help Wild Trout in Hot Water campaigns.
- VRFish provided expert advice on the Goulburn-Murray Water Recreational Area Management Plans.
- Provided advice on the design considerations for the major boating upgrades at Limeburners Point.
- Gathered views from delegates on the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal.
- Provided advice on the East Coast Gas Supply Project OPP – Environmental Effects Statement development.
- VRFish provided advice to the Victorian Fisheries Authority on the Victorian Aquaculture Abalone Translocation Protocol 2024, Roach and Tench Fisheries Notice 2024, the Murray Cod (Eildon Pondage) Fisheries Notice 2024 and draft Fisheries Notice Spider Crab.
- Promoted marine debris reduction initiatives by Tangaroa Blue, OzFish Unlimited, Parks Victoria and Zoos Victoria.

VRFish Priorities

Striving for organisational excellence, advocacy & building partnerships.

Organisational Excellence, Advocacy and 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

VRFish strive to be a high performing organisation that has strong foundations through 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.

2024/25 Highlights

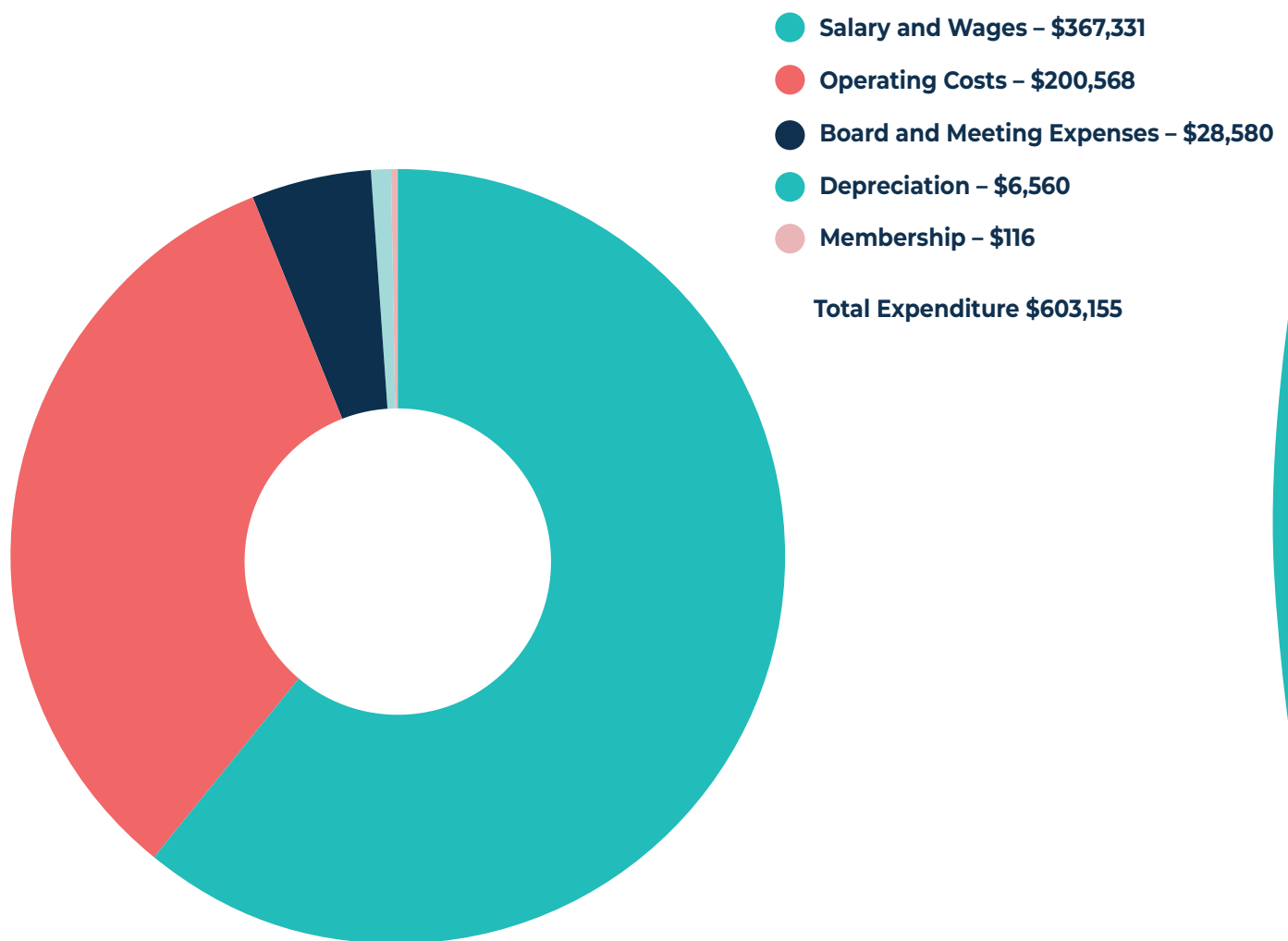
- Generation of significant VRFish content and messaging through the publishing of 74 website articles, more than 149,000 website views, 409 Facebook posts, and 266 Instagram posts.
- Reached 1,137,942 users on Facebook. An increase of 16% on last financial year.
- Website views of 149,810. A 37% increase on last financial year.
- Increase in followers across social media channels (Facebook and Instagram).





- VRFish featured in the media more than 76 times advocating on issues that impact recreational fishing in Victoria.
- Promoting funding opportunities and advice to our members to assist their work in making fishing better in their local patch.
- Ongoing relationships with Boating Industry Association of Victoria, OzFish Unlimited and Tangaroa Blue.
- As a recognised sport and recreation body, VRFish works with Sport and Recreation Victoria to promote VRFish and grant funding opportunities for our members.
- Ongoing relationships with Government stakeholders including the Victorian Fisheries Authority, Better Boating Victoria, Victorian Environmental Water Holder, Catchment Management Authorities, DEECA, Department of Transport, Parks Victoria, Australian Fisheries Management Authority and Water Authorities.
- VRFish provides advice on organisational and member progress under the 'Change our Game' and 'Balance the Board' initiatives. This is essential for VRFish recognition as a state level peak body, member access to Sport and Recreation Victorian grant funding and compliance with the Active Victoria Framework.
- Supported fishing clubs through providing advice and assistance in club governance procedures and best practice.

VRFish Expenditure 2024/25



We know how important recreational fishing is to the economy of Victoria and health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Rudi Holzfeind Snr with
a Murray Cod



Adam Campbell (L) and Rob Loats
(R) stocking freshwater catfish at
Watchem Lake with the VFA.



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