

Melina Bath MP
Shadow Minister for Outdoor Recreation
181 Franklin St,
Traralgon 3844
(via email – melina.bath@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Ms Bath,

RE: Feedback on *Outdoor Recreation Bill 2026*

Thankyou for writing to VRFish seeking our feedback on the Outdoor Recreation Bill recently tabled in Parliament.

The bill proposes the most significant structural reform in Fishing, Game Management and Outdoor Recreation in Victoria in the past 30 years, by abolishing both the *Victorian Fisheries Authority* and the *Game Management Authority* and combining to form one centralised body called *Outdoor Recreation Victoria (ORV)*.

VRFish is generally supportive of the creation of ORV and the land access panel, provided that the social licence for recreational fishing is not diminished and that fishing maintains its valued status, both socially and economically. There is a real risk that, within a broader outdoor recreation framework, the specific needs, expertise, and funding integrity of recreational fishing has the potential to be diluted. For this reason, VRFish is seeking a 'Recreational Fishing peak body' to be listed as a specific '*representative body*' in the new legislation. Recreational fishing is not specifically listed as a representative body, despite commercial fishing, seafood industry, aquaculture sector and outdoor recreation all being specifically listed.

Recreational fishing in Victoria is a highly specialised and economically significant sector. The 2020 Ernst and Young report titled 'The economic value of recreational fishing in Victoria', estimates that annually, 1.1 million people undertake 9.8 million fishing trips, contributing \$7.51 billion of direct and indirect output for the Victorian economy. The report found that recreational fishing supports 27,322 jobs across the state.

Further to this, recreational fishing is supported by a well-established, trusted, and transparent funding model through the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust (RFL). A recent study undertaken by Rhodes University in South Africa found that Victoria's RFL framework and trust, is the world's leading standard for a fishing licence program. Currently, the RFL contributes around \$8m per annum towards fisheries

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better, for everyone.**

compliance, fish production and stocking, facilities and infrastructure, events, new initiatives, representation and the RFL grants program. The RFL trust is listed in the Fisheries Act 1995, but its function and a commitment for its funds to be protected for recreational fishing is omitted from the ORV bill. VRFish seeks for the protection of the RFL trust funds listed in the ORV legislation, ensuring that it remains exclusive to recreational fishing investment and cannot be used to support other outdoor recreation interests.

VRFish is the Victorian Government recognised Recreational Fishing Peak Body. Founded in 1995, for more than 30 years we have advocated on behalf of Victoria's one million recreational fishers. Whether it is fish habitat, water security, fishing access and infrastructure or best practice, we work in partnership with government, government agencies and our affiliate organisations and members to make fishing better for everyone.

VRFish recommendations.

- 'Recreational Fishing peak body' to be listed as a specific '*representative body*' throughout the new legislation
- Recreational Fishing Licence trust fund specifically listed in the new legislation, as remaining exclusive to recreational fishing.
- Recreational Fishing continue to maintain its status as a 'sport' in Victoria.

If you would like further information, please feel free to reach out to our Executive Officer, Anthony McGrath on 0448 353 370 or by email; anthony@vrfish.com.au

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Loats', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rob Loats
Chair
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

17/04/2026