

Basin Plan Review Submissions
Murray–Darling Basin Authority
GPO Box 1801
Canberra City ACT 2601
(via email – BPRsubmissions@mdba.gov.au)

RE: VRFish submission to the 2026 Basin Plan Review

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2026 Basin Plan review.

VRFish is the peak body for recreational fishers in Victoria. Currently we advocate on behalf of over one million recreational fishers and represent over 150 affiliated clubs and associations. We see the basin plan as an opportunity to improve outcomes for recreational fishers, complementary to the overall health of the Murray Darling basin.

Native fish populations across the basin are in poor condition due to a combination of threats including invasive species, habitat degradation, poor flow regimes and barriers to fish movement. Improving river health is paramount to the migration, aggregation and breeding of native species including Murray cod, Trout Cod, Golden perch, Silver perch, Macquarie perch, freshwater crayfish and a variety of small body native fish, several of which are listed as rare or critically endangered.

The foremost concern of Victorian recreational fishers is the lack of resources allocated towards the management of invasive European Carp and we join a chorus of state and federal agencies seeking to undertake measures to control carp numbers across the basin, through a funded National Threat Abatement Plan.

Further to this, water is a shared resource which provides community benefit in terms of wellbeing. Outdoor users are becoming negative towards environmental flows due to water releases being scheduled to occur during holiday periods and long weekends. These, now frequent releases, have a negative impact on camping and fishing locations and river access tracks. Ultimately, this results in poor economic and social wellbeing for regional communities.

VRFish recommends a range of measures that prioritise the recovery of native fish species throughout the Murray Darling basin, and we welcome robust engagement on each of these.

VRFish Recommendations.

- Support carp control measures through the establishment of a national threat abatement plan which includes, carp harvesting, releasing the carp herpes virus and preventing targeting carp breeding aggregations
- Review flow regimes in consultation with CMA's, VRFish and VFA, to:

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

- Support and prioritise native fish breeding cycles, and decreasing the prevalence of carp breeding aggregations. This also includes investigating the long-term impacts of cold-water pollution caused by of water releases from lower outlets of storage reservoirs during native fish recruitment periods.
 - Manage high, pulse and environmental flow timing to minimise impacts on recreational fishers and their families, but shifting releases outside of holiday periods and long weekends.
- Address the impacts from increased high-water diversions, intervalley transfers and environmental flows that are clearly creating degradation to the Goulburn River.
 - Promote waterway flow regimes that address the recovery and establishment of fringing aquatic vegetation to increase micro and macro invertebrates. Healthy waterways are dependent on fringing vegetation and its associated fauna food chain.
 - Deliver high security of supply recreational water as promised to recreational lakes that receive recreational water deliveries via both the Wimmera and Mallee Pipeline Projects. It is imperative that this recreational water promise must be adhered to or to maintain positive community sentiment with fisher's and regional communities, regarding their support of environmental flows. (Wimmera River).
 - Support the establishment and delivery of regional native fish recovery plans in favour of a basin wide native fish recovery plan. Where appropriate the MDBA to assist in the expansion, establishment of native fish restocking programs nationally and most importantly, the scientific monitoring of the outcomes.

Recommended complementary measures

- Investigate and remove barriers to fish passage and/or construct fishways.
- Introduce instream habitat restoration (example: woody habitat, rocks)
- Install self-cleaning irrigation pump and channel offtake screens to prevent the loss of native fish.
- Continue to fence riparian zones to prevent livestock access and pollution.
- Establish a federal government administered annual complementary measures funding program that is available to local agencies, clubs, organisations and OZFish Unlimited with demonstrated expertise in project delivery.

It is well established that recreational fishing is an economic driver throughout regional Australia. Healthy fisheries translate directly into stronger and more resilient regional economies whilst improving community wellbeing. Therefore, it is critical that the Basin Plan must maintain the support of the communities who live, work and fish along these rivers

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

30/04/2026