VICTORIAN RECREATIONAL
FISHING PEAK BODY

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Luke O'Sullivan
Director Fisheries Management
Victorian Fisheries Authority
Level 19, 1 Spring Street
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(Via email – luke.osullivan@vfa.vic.gov.au)

21th October 2026

Dear Luke O'Sulivan,

Draft Recreational Abalone Fisheries Notice

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Fisheries (Recreational Abalone Open Days) Notice for Victorian central waters for 2026/27.

For a long time, VRFish has unsuccessfully advocated on behalf of divers for an increase in recreational fisher access to abalone in the central waters.

Whilst we appreciate that the fishery requires special protections, Abalone are no longer the high value species they once were. Recent beach prices for commercial catch have been as low as $15/kilogram and many commercial fishers have struggled to sell their catch. This places the fishery at much lower risk of illegal exploitation than it was in 2019, when beach prices were as high as $50/kilogram.

The Central Zone is one of the only recovering Abalone stocks in the world, thanks to the hard work of the VFA and data collection by the commercial sector. The TACC has remained stable for 5 seasons and the most recent stock assessment shows that due to market conditions (not biology), the TACC has not been fully caught for two seasons. CPUE remains stable or increasing in the central zone and FIS results are promising, as the stock continues to show signs of improvement, via a 'weight of evidence' approach.

For these reasons, VRFish believes now is the right time to review the recreational abalone regulations, in the lead up to the 'sunsetting' of the Fisheries Regulation 2019. This will ensure that recreational fishers receive fair and reasonable access to the resource over the coming decade.

In our 2026 state election priority list, VRFish has listed 'a review of the recreational abalone regulations with a view to increase access' as one of our priorities. We have been canvassing all parties contesting the 2026 election with these priorities.

VRFish feels it is also important to note that "Poachers" are not and should not be considered as recreational fishers. This language has permeated through the sector for many years and unfairly labels legitimate recreational fishers as criminals. Recreational abalone fishers are in fact rule abiding divers who invest in boating and diving equipment and follow the regulations when targeting key dive species like abalone, scallops and southern rock lobster. Therefore, it is the

VRFish opinion that any restriction placed on the recreational abalone fisher only impacts the rule abiding, licenced recreational fishes. Whilst organised criminal's continue to flout all regulations and closures.

VRFish does not indorse or support the access terms listed in the draft fisheries notice and calls for the review of the recreational abalone regulations to be undertaken in time for the 2027 abalone season.

If you would like to discuss this further, please reach out and I am more than happy to discuss our proposal.

Yours faithfully



Anthony McGrath
Executive Officer
VRFish - Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

COPY TO – Nick Gall, Abalone Fishery Manager. nick.gall@vfa.vic.gov.au