



# Media Release

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FROM THE OFFICE OF VRFISH – VICTORIAS' RECREATIONAL FISHING PEAK BODY

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## Council Decision Misguided...

VRFish Chairman Bob Pearce said today the recent decision by the City of Greater Bendigo Council is deeply concerning.

The City of Greater Bendigo Council has agreed to lodge an application to the Department of Primary Industries to lop trees in Lake Eppalock to allow power boating and water skiers to return to the lake at the lower water level.

The importance of protecting all available fish habitat in the lake has been accepted at numerous stakeholder meetings over the past 3-4 years.

It is even more important now at these lower water levels, as fish stocks become more vulnerable to predation by birds, with large standing dead trees affording fish the best protection.

Some members of the Council voted against the proposal and have understood the importance of the habitat to fish and the consequent economic benefits that flow from fishing at Lake Eppalock.

Every year from September, fishers visit Lake Eppalock in large numbers to fish for golden perch and later in the season, for Murray Cod, which are a prime angling species. Many will visit every weekday after work during daylight saving. They won't go, if the fish are not there!

The reasons given by the majority of Council members in support of lopping the trees, is the economic impact of returning power boating and skiers to Lake Eppalock. The fact is that recreational fishing is a higher and more consistent economic contributor, particularly at these lower water levels.

Mr Pearce said the Council have apparently disregarded the greater risk posed to operators of faster boats and skiers at these extreme low water levels.

There is just so much unknown hazardous material below the water surface, apart from trees to deter users of faster boats. It simply is not worth the risk.

The water surface area available at the lake and particularly the area in question at current levels are far too small to accommodate multi users at the same time.

Mr Pearce asked *Who* is going to judge what numbers of users can operate safely and how are they to be managed. Is there going to be times of exclusion for fishing boats?

It seems to me that the Council may not have been sufficiently informed to make such a decision, however as the manager of the water concerned Goulburn Murray Water will certainly need to address all the issues before deciding to submit an application to remove fish habitat allowing power boating on Lake Eppalock at these extreme low water levels.

I would assume Marine Safety Victoria also has a say as Public Safety is the main issue here.

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