



# Media Release

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FROM THE OFFICE OF VRFISH – VICTORIA'S RECREATIONAL FISHING PEAK BODY

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## WHAT COMES FIRST THE FOREST OR THE MANAGEMENT?

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) has released the River Red Gum Forests Investigation Draft Proposals Paper.

This draft proposals paper includes 111 recommendations outlining changes to 1.2million hectares of land, spanning the Murray River from Wodonga to the South Australian border and as far south as Nagambie.

VRFish Executive Officer, Christopher Collins said “What is so confusing about this paper is that VEAC seeks the publics’ acceptance of recommendations without the public knowing what the recommendations actually mean or entail.

An extremely concerning point for VRFish and the recreational fishing community is that there is no acknowledgement or recognition of fishing in the proposed national parks.

Fishing is what attracts so many people to the Murray River in pursuit of the magnificent Murray cod.

VRFish strongly supports environmental flows and wetland watering. VEAC must ensure to work with the Murray Darling Basin Commission and the Catchment Management Authorities to ensure that what they propose can be achieved.

Boat launching opportunities must be retained and improved. Limiting use to official boat ramps will disadvantage so many people, not just the fishers! It is concerning to note that there is only one ‘official’ boat ramp between Nagambie weir and Echuca.

Camping in Australia is our cultural heritage and so is the tradition of having a ‘controlled’ camp fire. By introducing a year-round ban on camp fires is closing the door on our history.

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I'm sure Banjo Patterson's world famous Waltzing Matilda would not have the same impact if the swaggy could not watch his billy boil!

All Aussies agree that fires should not take place during total fire ban periods, not to follow this policy is absurd, however a year-round ban is not acceptable.

Campers must be afforded the opportunity to supply their own firewood and given the option of where they camp.

All the way through the paper it acknowledges that the management agencies should be adequately resourced to perform their functions. So what is wrong with the current management agencies – wouldn't they do a better job if they were given more resources?"

The management agencies that currently look after the 1.2million hectares have good existing management policies – if these policies were properly enforced through greater presence and the management arrangements adequately resourced the need for the proposed changes would be negated.

Collins says "VEAC have not adequately acknowledged what is currently in place!".

The draft proposals paper is out for public comment until 21 September 2007. VRFish encourages everyone to put forward their views to VEAC – [www.veac.vic.gov.au](http://www.veac.vic.gov.au)

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