



MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE
VRFISH OFFICE
FEBRUARY 2007

Welcome to the Monthly Report from the VRFish Office.

This newsletter should be sent on to all clubs and members of associations that you represent. Anyone wishing to receive this newsletter directly can e-mail Alison at alison@vrfish.com.au or phone (03) 9686 7077 to be added to the distribution list. If you have any difficulty reading or receiving this Report, this month's edition is also now on our website at http://www.vrfish.com.au/news_index.htm

- **Successful Workshop** – Joe Helper, Minister for Agriculture, presented his vision for recreational fisheries at VRFish's 3 March 2007 Strategic Planning Workshop at DPI Snobs Creek. The Labor government will be investing \$12 million in new recreation fishing projects. Labor believes in giving families more opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors and outlined his plan for investing in new family fishing programs during the school holidays, stocking small lakes with large, ready-to-catch trout to help younger fishers. The Minister's presentation also outlined plans for fish cleaning tables, trial artificial reefs, habitat improvement program, improving angler access and boosting fish stocks. The Minister's presentation helped set the scene to assist the VRFish Membership start to map its way forward for the next five years and clearly confirmed the Government's policy that VRFish is the peak recreational fishing body representing the 550,000+ Victorian recreational fishers. For full workshop outcomes, check out www.vrfish.com.au.
- **Bag and Size Limit Review** – Thank you to all who participated and sent in submissions on suggested changes to Victoria's recreational fishing bag and size limits. The Review Panel has met to review all the submissions and have collated the draft recommendations that were tabled at the 4 March 2007 VRFish State Council Meeting. The VRFish State Council has been given the opportunity to ratify the draft recommendations, prior to their submission to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). It is understood that DPI will be commencing their cycle of community consultation soon.
- **Devilbend Update** – Parks Victoria have advised that the preparation of the management plan for the Devilbend Natural Features Reserve is to commence in February 2007, dependant somewhat upon availability of staff given Park Victoria's current priority managing fires across the State. It is expected that the final approved management plan will be signed off in mid 2008 dependent upon issues raised by the community, potential user groups and other Government agencies. The Park, apart from the existing small public area on Graydens Road, shall remain closed to the public. Parks Victoria is keen to ensure the safety of members of the public, and anticipates that the Park will not be open to the general public for some considerable time.

- **Inadequacies Continue** – Chairman Bob Pearce describes a typical fishing day trying to launch and retrieve his boat. “The conditions of our launching facilities continue to be disastrous. I went fishing out of Stony Point during the long weekend and had a good day on the water! However, it took me an hour to launch and an hour and a half to recover my boat when I returned to the ramp. There was a queue to get into the launching area in the morning, thereby blocking vehicle access to others driving in the area. On return from fishing, the queue from the car park to the launching ramp was several hundred metres long. Due to the limited ‘tie-up’ facilities at Stony Point, I had to beach my boat and hit several rocks on the bottom in trying to get into the beach. The cost of using this sub-standard facility is \$10. VRFish has met with and written to the Minister for Roads and Ports, Tim Pallas MP, about this kind of problem, which is replicated all over the State. As yet, we have not had a response. I am pleased to report that there was no ‘ramp rage’, although everyone was clearly unhappy about the lack of facilities!”
- **PFD’s** – Chairman Bob Pearce has also expressed his disappointment in Marine Safety Victoria’s ‘extreme’ rules for Personal Flotation Devices. “I was checked over by a Marine Safety Victoria officer regarding safety equipment etc a few weeks ago. He was very polite, but pointed out that I had not worn a PFD while driving my boat from the tie up jetty and onto my trailer (a distance of about six or seven metres) and indicated that I could be fined for this. I have no complaint about the chap, as he was just doing his job, but it seems ridiculous that people could be fined for this! I would say that virtually no one wears a PFD for this. On the day in question, this officer made the same point to another boater during an inspection and it appeared that they were also not too happy with this – and let the officer know about it. I feel that most boat owners accept the rules concerning PFD’s, even if they might not agree with them, but having to wear one when driving onto your trailer, or risk being fined, is taking things to extremes in my view.”
- **CONS Complete** – The 2007 CONS Meetings have been completed for yet another year. Wally Cubbin, Goulburn Broken regional representative, provides his report from the North East (held at Benalla, 7 February) and North West (held at Bendigo, 14 February) meetings. Fisheries Victoria has undertaken to have the full CONS reports out on or before June this year. Fish stocking programs were discussed for each region, and the results were the same as last years stocking program. It will depend on what water there is in the areas that are to be restocked, as there appears to be more waterways drying up due to the drought conditions. It appeared from discussions at Benalla that the Nagambie Lakes & Weir are to have stocking recommence after a break of 15 years. There is a planned release of 50,000 Murray cod starting 2008. This stocking will alternate with the release of fish below the weir every 2nd year for 5 years. The stocking is likely to be between Mitchelton & Seymour in the Goulburn River. There are some waterways that will not be stocked at all for a variety of reasons; Lake Mokoan is just one example.
- **Code of Conduct** – VRFish has updated its Recreational Fishing Code of Conduct. Recreational fishers have a responsibility to look after fisheries resources for the benefit of the environment and future generations of fishers. VRFish has devised a Code of Conduct for recreational boat, shore, river, stream and jetty fishers in Victoria. The Code of Conduct provides guidelines on how to minimise conflicts on the water, and should be adopted by all recreational fishers. For the updated version check out http://www.vrfish.com.au/Code_of_Conduct.htm
- **Office Opening** – Joe Helper, Minister for Agriculture will open VRFish’s new home on Monday 19 March 2007. The move to Marine House has been an exciting journey for VRFish, allowing it to be more accessible for its membership, as well as other key stakeholders.

- **Glenelg Spiny Freshwater Crayfish** – Fisheries Victoria have issued a twelve month Fisheries Notice to provide interim protection to the Glenelg Spiny Freshwater Crayfish (GSFC) from recreational fishing. Due to current environmental conditions, drought and fire, the GSFC has become more vulnerable. As part of this action, the Glenelg Hopkins Fishery Management Plan recommended the development of a monitoring program to assess the sustainability of the species. PIRVic will commence this research in early 2007. For a full copy of the Fisheries Notice, check out http://www.vrfish.com.au/Angler_Info.htm
- **Abalone Virus** – You all would have been seeing a lot of media coverage about the abalone virus outbreak in the west of Victoria. There is not a lot known about how the virus is spreading but we, recreational fishers, can definitely do something to minimise the spread of the virus. Fisheries Victoria have developed biosecurity protocols to assist recreational fishers decontaminate vessels, wetsuits and diving equipment. To decontaminate vessels, wetsuits, dive equipment, catch bags, boxes and people, wash with soapy freshwater. Abalone shell, meat and gut should NOT be shucked (taken from the shell) at sea; dumped into the sea or be used as fishing bait. Take your abalone catch home and dispose of the waste with your household rubbish. For detailed decontamination measures, check out www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing
- **Upcoming events** -
 - 19/3 – VRFish Office Opening @ Marine House, South Melbourne
 - 31/3 – Native Fish Australia Trout Cod Workshop @ Preston Angling Club