



VRFish have been busy advocating for, and representing, Victoria's recreational fishers.

It has been a very difficult start to 2020 with the bushfire crisis in East Gippsland and the North-East. There will be many challenges ahead in the recovery efforts and recent rains have been a double-edged sword for our fish and our waterways. When the time is right, we will all need to encourage recreational fishers to head back and support our impacted communities and businesses that rely upon fishing tourism.

The Golden Tag Program announced by the Minister for Fishing and Boating will offer a fantastic incentive to drive fishing tourism across the region when that gets underway. There will be 1,000 fish tagged with the first 10 tagged fish caught worth a \$10,000 reward and any other fish caught after that worth \$2,000. This initiative is testament to the recognised economic contribution of recreational fishing in Victoria, particularly in our regional areas.

Over summer, inter-valley water transfers were a hot topic. The Goulburn River was used as a water

pipe to send water down to the Murray River for downstream users, and to also maintain water levels in the 'off river' storage of Lake Victoria in South Australia. Consistent high flows in the lower Goulburn River have caused erosion of the lower bank and the loss of trees and vegetation that stabilise the riverbanks. The loss of fish habitat and increased erosion means a muddier river and higher rates of siltation of deep refuge pools. It's bad news for fishing, so we have raised awareness of the issue and written to the Federal Water Minister. [See the story [HERE](#)]

The reform of boat ramp management across Port Phillip Bay and Western Port took a step forward with our submission to a governance review. We hope the final report will be released soon to provide a way forward to our busiest boating waters. The boating facility management at Launching Way has been a hot topic of discussion. We have advocated to Government that the current management should be extended, and that any drop in service levels would not be acceptable to recreational fishers.

Normally, by this time of the year, we would have launched our *Steer Clear In The Rip* campaign to coincide with onset of warmer

waters and kingfish schools. So far, it's been an unusually quiet season and instead southern bluefin tuna schools have captured the imagination of fishers around Port Phillip Heads. VRFish is continuing to promote the *Tuna Champions* program to help fishers get the most out of their catch, such as bleeding fish, and putting the fish on ice.

'Pinkies' will continue to be the flavour of bay fishing with a massive recruitment pulse continuing to grow and take our baits like there is no tomorrow. In preparation for some bumper years ahead VRFish is refreshing its snapper survival campaign into a broader 'snapper stewards' program.

As the voice of recreational fishing in Victoria we are the 'go to' organisation to provide comment and advice on a variety of matters that may affect the quality of recreational fishing. To make it even easier for fishers to get involved, we have created a *Have Your Say* webpage [[HERE](#)] that lists the current consultation process VRFish are consulting-on.

VRFish fisher surveys continue to be extremely well received and have been invaluable to our advocacy efforts. We thank all the fishers that completed our surveys for the Fisheries Regulation review



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