



Project Banjo
<projectbanjoactiongroup@gmail.com>

14/08/2017 10:45 PM

To stingray.consultation@vfa.vic.gov.au
cc
bcc
Subject Official Project Banjo Petition
Response to Ray Protection Fisheries
Notice

Dear Victorian Fisheries Authority,

This response to the Fisheries Notice to improve protection of rays in Victoria is submitted on behalf of the 32,122 people who have signed the Project Banjo 'Stop the Senseless Slaughter of Rays' petition launched in April 2017:

<https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-senseless-slaughter-of-rays>

We would like to thank the Directors and staff at VFA for their diligence and concern in recognising the need for greater regulation and enforcement regarding the mistreatment of rays in Victoria for which we have provided video and photographic evidence e.g.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rQXGyUm_fl

We would especially like to thank the Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford, VFA Executive Director Travis Dowling, Education and Enforcement Director Ian Parkes, Policy and Licensing Director Dallas D'Silva and Principal Policy Analyst Jo Klemke for the roles they have each played in liaising with the recreational fishing community to formulate and propose solutions via the Fisheries Notice currently under consultation. We would also like to thank the Fisheries Officers who are addressing this issue at the frontline. We believe that catching and dealing with offenders to the full extent of the law is critical to resolving this issue. We look forward to seeing reductions in the number of rays both cruelly and unlawfully slaughtered as a greater number of offenders are deterred, warned, fined and prosecuted in moving forward.

We would also like to recognise all of those within the recreational fishing community, local, state, national and international media, local councils and other organisations who have met and interacted with us positively and responsively over recent months, including but not limited to VR Fish, FishCare Victoria, Future Fish and other key individuals from both the fishing media and retail sectors. We have appreciated the opportunity to work alongside fishing community representatives who have unanimously shared many of our concerns, resulting in positive discussions with the mutual objectives of arriving at win-win solutions for all stakeholders.

Thank you for recognising the need and benefits of introducing greater protective measures such as the proposed ban on rays, skates and guitarfish within 400 mtrs of man made structures where these rays are particularly vulnerable, no take of rays over 1.5 mtr wingspan and reduction of the bag limit from 5 per person to 1.

Thank you also for recognising the need for greater enforcement of existing regulations (in particular the breaches of Regulation 101: Failure and forthcoming regulations and for your commitment to developing education initiatives to directly address this problem. We appreciate that signage will soon be installed on the piers reminding fishers of best practice regarding rays, in addition to other measures that have been discussed to increase educational focus with the objective towards prevention. We look forward to the delivery of those initiatives.

As you are aware, our concerns about the treatment of rays (which are rarely considered a target species) in Victoria initially arose from both the regular (unlawful) dispatch and cruel mutilation and live return of unwanted fiddler rays, in addition to the taking of the much larger smooth rays

(up to 350 kgs) for which there is currently a bag limit of 5 per person per day. As outlined in our petition, we maintain that these and other rays have greater value alive performing vital functions within their natural ecosystems and celebrated by members of the local and tourist communities than they do dead. We believe that all water users wish to conduct their recreational pursuits in conjunction with the healthiest aquatic ecosystems possible, and that protection of rays in Victoria will benefit all concerned, including fishers, divers and all others who enjoy the presence of these animals as part of their experience of Victorian waters.

As per the exemplary precedent of ray protection set in Western Australia in 2012, we believe that Victoria is uniquely positioned through this consultation to set both a national and global standard for the protection of rays in alignment with broader community values as represented by the 32,122 signatories on the Project Banjo petition. While we applaud the proposed changes outlined in the Fisheries Notice, we respectfully ask for a total ban on the taking of rays in Victoria which we believe will yield the greatest win-win outcomes for underwater ecosystems and all reasonable stakeholders. Additionally, we request that a total ban on the taking of rays, skates and guitarfish be advanced from a Fisheries Notice (which has a 12 month renewable lifespan) to become regulation as a matter of priority.

Once again, our sincere thanks for all of the hard work that has been invested into resolving this issue. We look forward to better outcomes for the rays of Victoria as a result of this broad community consultation.

Your Sincerely,
The Project Banjo Action Group