

# Celebrating 20 Years of...



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at work

**2004–2024**





# Historical Timeline

In December 1989, the then Minister for Conservation, Forest and Lands directed an inquiry into the allocation of fish resources in Victorian bays and inlets to be referred to a parliamentary committee. One of the 51 recommendations was to establish a general recreational fishing licence but it was not accepted.

The mid-90s saw many substantial reforms taking place with recreational fisheries management and consultation, including the creation of the *Fisheries Act 1995* and the formation of VRFish in 1995.

There were serious concerns raised about the sustainability of Victoria's bay and inlets fisheries, particularly the impact of commercial net fishing and scallop dredging. Recreational fishers were concerned about the health of the bays and the poor quality of recreational fishing and demanded the Government do more to manage recreational fisheries effectively.

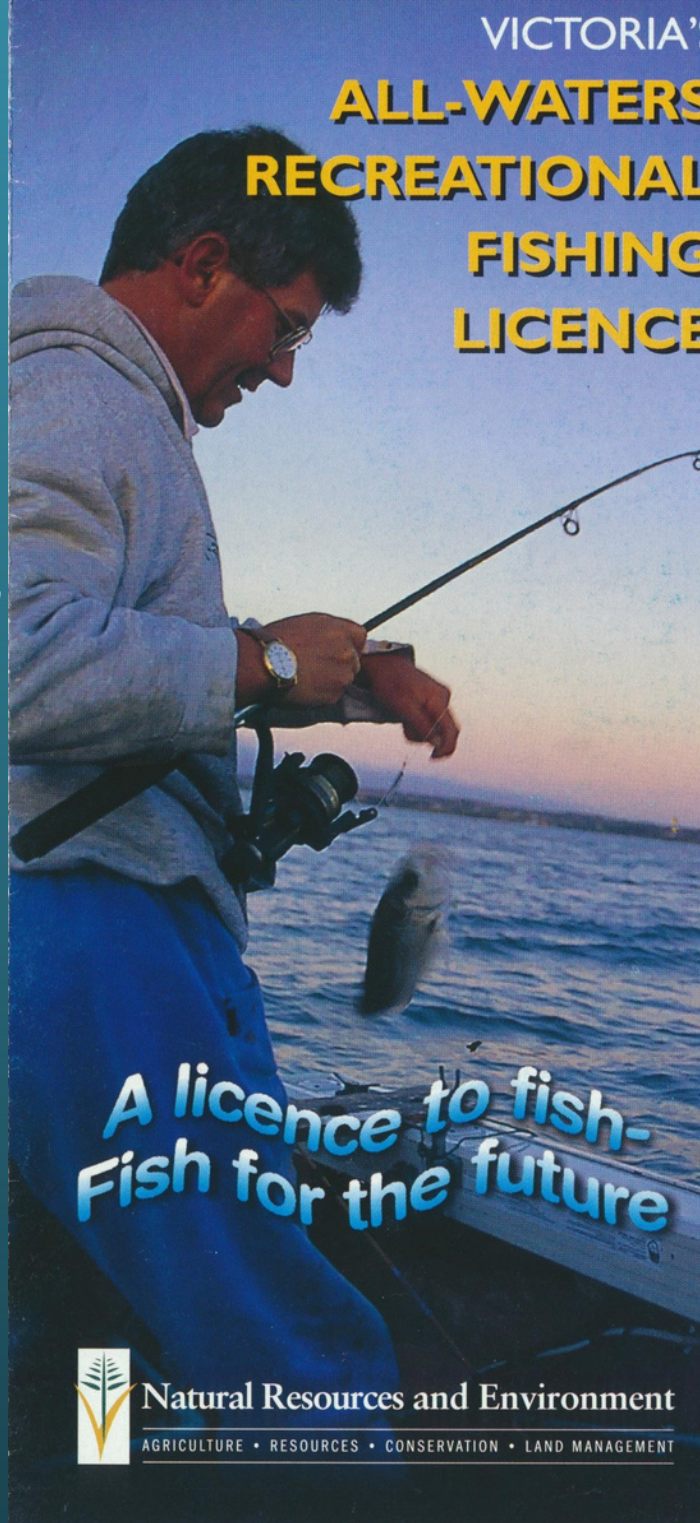
Rex Hunt led the charge on behalf of recreational fishers and established the Futurefish Foundation to lobby Government on the introduction of an all waters licence, and was largely responsible for bringing about the cessation of scallop dredging and a significant reduction in commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay.

The great work of the Futurefish Foundation has been led over the last decade by David Kramer to ensure that Victorian anglers continue to get the most out of funds raised from the sale of recreational fishing licences.

VRFish prepared a formal submission in 1995 recommending the extension of the then current inland licence to cover marine waters, and thus creating an 'all waters' Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL) in Victoria.

The Government responded positively, however told VRFish they would have to demonstrate overwhelming support for a new licence - then Government would introduce it.

VRFish consulted with all interested groups and individuals and received almost full support for the introduction of an 'all waters' RFL.



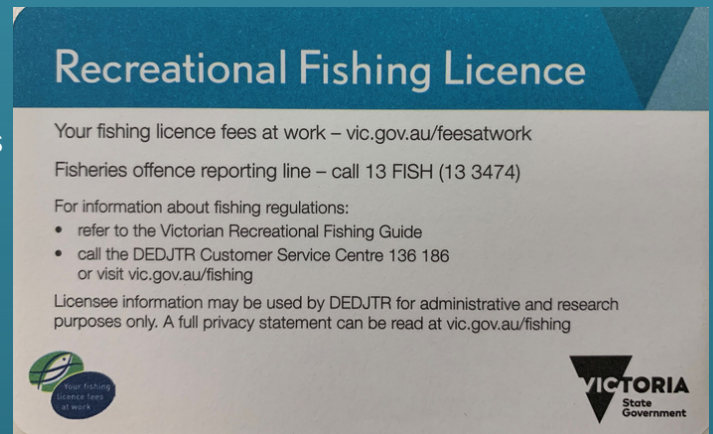
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# Historical Timeline (Cont).

Fisheries Victoria carried out two surveys of recreational fishers which both indicated over 80% of people supported the concept, providing the funds went into a trust fund for distribution on projects and made an improvement to recreational fishing.

Victoria introduced an 'all waters' or general RFL on 15 July 1999 and was the first Australian State to do so.

At the introduction an annual Recreational Fishing Licence cost \$20; a 28-day licence cost \$10 and a 48-hour licence cost \$5.



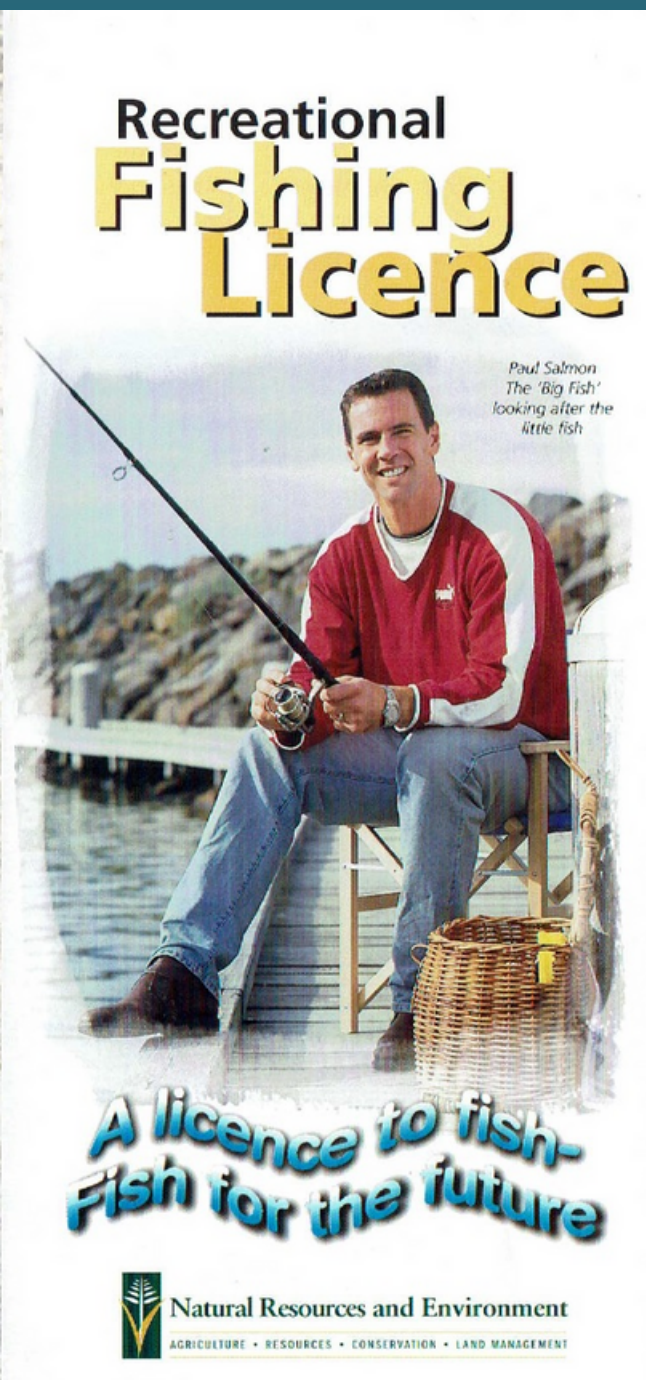
According to the Department of Natural Resource and Environment in May 1999, the money collected through the sale of RFLs would be used to fund improved recreational fishing opportunities through fish stocking, junior angling education, facilities, habitat improvement, commercial fishing licence buy-outs, ten new Fisheries Officer positions, pier fish information stations, and research.

Fishers were encouraged to make suggestions to VRFish on how the money from licence fees should be spent.

In November 2000, the Government amended the Fisheries Act to allow for the establishment of a formal Trust Account for RFL revenue. **The Trust Account - a first for Victoria - came into effect on 1 April 2001.**

The Fisheries Revenue Allocation Committee, which included recreational angler representatives, was appointed on 1 August 2001, and was tasked with providing advice to the Minister on the priorities for the distribution of funds from the RFL Trust Account.

In time, the committee was replaced by the Recreational Fishing Grants Working Group which had its first meeting on 6 November 2009. In 2021 the group was renamed as the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Advisory Committee.





# Significant Investments Over the Years

## Education and Enforcement

Education and enforcement plays a big part in maintaining and protecting our fish stocks. Ten new Fisheries Officers were employed back in 2001 when the Trust Account was established. Funding was increased to employ an additional 3 Officers in later years.



## Commercial Licence Buy-backs

In response to serious concerns that fishers had about the impacts of commercial net fishing and scallop dredging, and the poor quality of recreational fishing in Port Phillip and other inlets, RFL funds were used to fund the buy-out of 108 of 208 commercial fishery access licences.

## End of Inland Commercial Fishing

RFL funds were used in 2002 to buy out all remaining inland commercial fishing licences, effectively ending the commercial netting of Murray cod, golden perch and silver perch. Aided by refinements to bag and size limits and increased stocking, these popular native species are now regularly caught by fishers right across northern Victoria.



## Recreational Fishing Havens

Fishing at Lake Tyers and Mallacoota Inlet has improved year after year since commercial fishing was ceased. Bream and dusky flathead are plentiful and there are lots of other welcome surprises for anglers such as luderick, silver trevally, snapper, and tailor.



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# Significant Investments Over the Years

## A Million Murray Cod into Lake Eildon

Prior to 2009 you almost never heard of a cod getting caught in Lake Eildon, it was all trout and redfin. That's until \$800,000 was used to stock one million Murray cod. These days cod would be the most targeted fish in the lake, with regular catches of fish pushing the magical 1 metre mark.



## Reefs for Land-based Fishers

The three inshore reefs have become well established and significantly improve the chances of land-based anglers getting onto some good fish. Portarlington has produced some cracking snapper up to 6kg in recent years, whilst Frankston and Altona Piers also offer great fishing.

## Booming Trout After the Drought

With the end of the millenium drought there was a great opportunity to quickly build some world class fisheries. Guess what happens when dry lakes fill and are stocked with trout. The fishing that followed for the next few years at lakes such as Tooliorook, Burrumbeet and Bolac was nothing short of spectacular.



## Torquay Offshore Reef

In 2015 RFL funds were used to create a large artificial reef system in 25 metres off Torquay. The reef is now teeming with life, and with the added bonus of having Fish Aggregating Devices attached over the summer months, it attracts popular species such as snapper, gummy sharks and yellowtail kingfish.



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# Significant Investments Over the Years

## Building Northern Native Fisheries

Fishing opportunities for popular native species were increased significantly across northern Victoria with improved access for boat and shore-based anglers in the Campaspe, Loddon and Gunbower systems and the stocking of more than 1.2 million additional Murray cod and golden perch. The rewards of this investment are still being enjoyed by fishers to this day.



## Ongoing Funding for Fish Stocking

In 2011-12, an annual allocation of \$200,000 to the VFA's state-wide fish stocking program commenced. This was increased to \$820,000 in 2014-15. These funds have seen tens of millions of brown and rainbow trout, Murray cod, golden perch, and Australian bass stocked for recreational fishers to catch.

## Restoring Shellfish Reefs

A dream came true for the Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club when they received funds to establish the first series of Port Phillip shellfish reefs in 2018. The reefs near Geelong and St Kilda are flourishing and over time will boost fish numbers and clean the water, which all adds up to better fishing for those who frequent Port Phillip.



## Safeguarding Chinook Salmon

In 2011 RFL funds were invested to review and improve Chinook salmon supply from the Snobs Creek hatchery, near Eildon, which holds the only stock of Chinook salmon in Australia. The result was a major increase in salmon production and regular catches of trophy Chinook salmon from 2015 onwards.



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# Significant Investments Over the Years

## Wild Trout Management Program

In response to a decline in catches in the hot summer of 2013-14, funds were invested to better understand our wild trout fishery and what can be done to manage and improve it. It included extensive population surveys, tagging of fish, and the assessment of riparian shading and the effectiveness of stocking. This important work is now being led by the Australian Trout Foundation.



## Advocating for Victorian Fishers

For over two decades VRFish has represented the interests of Victoria's fishers. Whether it's fish habitat, water security and quality, fishing access or best practice, VRFish aim to work in partnership to make sure Victoria's fishing experiences continue to improve, be sustainable and more enjoyable for all Victorians.



## Fishcare Educating Future Fishers

Fishcare Victoria has been receiving ongoing funding since 2014 to support its statewide operations. This volunteer-led program provides a vital role in promoting responsible and sustainable fishing practices to school students and the wider community.



## Getting more people fishing

In recent years up to \$2.3m has been allocated annually to help implement the Government's plan to get more people fishing, more often. This has included the Victorian Recreational Catch Survey, more fish stocking, Stronger Fishing Club Grants, Festivals and Events, and many access and infrastructure projects (see next page).



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# Getting more people fishing, more often

The Victorian Government's plan to get more people fishing, more often saw an unprecedented \$37m of state revenue invested in the delivery of a suite of projects to grow recreational fishing. This was supported by a \$9m co-investment from the RFL Trust Account. A further \$35m has been invested through Phase 2 of the Government's plan, with continued investment of around \$2.3m from the RFL Trust Account each year.

## Better Fishing Facilities Program

Fishing has been improved at dozens of locations with investment in boat ramps, jetties and fishing platforms, access tracks and fish cleaning tables.



## Onwater access at inland waters

RFL funds have been used to provide for on-water access for recreational fishers at reservoirs such as Barkers Creek, Tullaroop, Lauriston, Upper Coliban, Malmsbury and Hepburn Lagoon. This includes facilities for tinnies, canoes and kayaks and boats with electric motors.



## Festivals, Conferences and Events

The VFA has staged numerous events over the last 6-7 years attracting thousands of attendees to visit regions all over the state. Every year sees the Murray cod and Wild Trout conferences grow bigger, and the Hooked on Fishing Festivals at Portland and Lakes Entrance attract thousands of people. The annual series of VicFish Kids events have now introduced tens of thousands of children and parents to fishing.



## Stronger Fishing Clubs Grants

Over 180 Victorian fishing clubs have been provided with grants of \$2,000 to help strengthen their clubs.

## Increased Fish Stocking

In 2019-20, \$1.2 million of RFL funds purchased an additional 2.8 million fish that were stocked into Victorian waterways. This helped the VFA reach a record stocking of 8 million fish! This includes stocking many urban lakes with catchable size Murray cod, golden perch and silver perch for the first time ever!

# More people fishing, more often!



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# Recreational Fishing Large Grants Program

Since 2001, the RFL Large Grants Program  
has funded over

375 projects

for a total investment of

\$20.8 million



\$5.86 million

has been provided for

148 projects

to improve access and facilities for  
recreational fishers

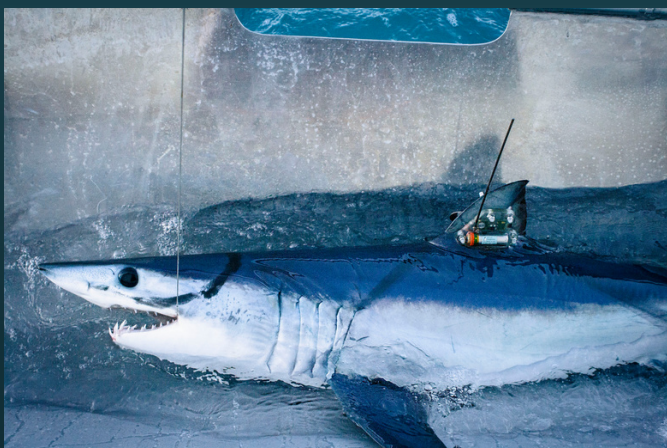


\$7.35 million

has been provided for

87 projects

related to research on key recreational  
species and fisheries



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# Recreational Fishing Large Grants Program



\$5.33 million

has been provided for

66 projects

to improve habitat and the sustainability of important recreational fisheries

\$2.27 million

has been provided for

74 projects

on fisheries related education, information and training



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# Recreational Fishing Small Grants Program

The Small Grants Program has continued to be popular with angling clubs and community groups and has funded over

**405 projects**

worth more than

**\$1.034 million**

since its inception in 2010.



## Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Advisory Committee



David Grisold (Chair)

Members of the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Advisory Committee (formerly known as Recreational Fishing Grants Working Group) are appointed by the Minister for Fishing and Boating.



Steven Threlfall



Niki Duckstein

The role of the Advisory Committee is to provide advice to the Minister on the expenditure of all Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account funds. The Advisory Committee assesses and provides advice on applications for grants received under the Recreational Fishing Grants Program.



Katherine Brown

The Advisory Committee comprises eight people (plus an independent Chairperson) who collectively can provide a range of knowledge, experience and views on recreational fishing in Victoria.



Geoff Fisher



Joanne Dobson



Robert Krix



Josette Nichols



Steven Relf

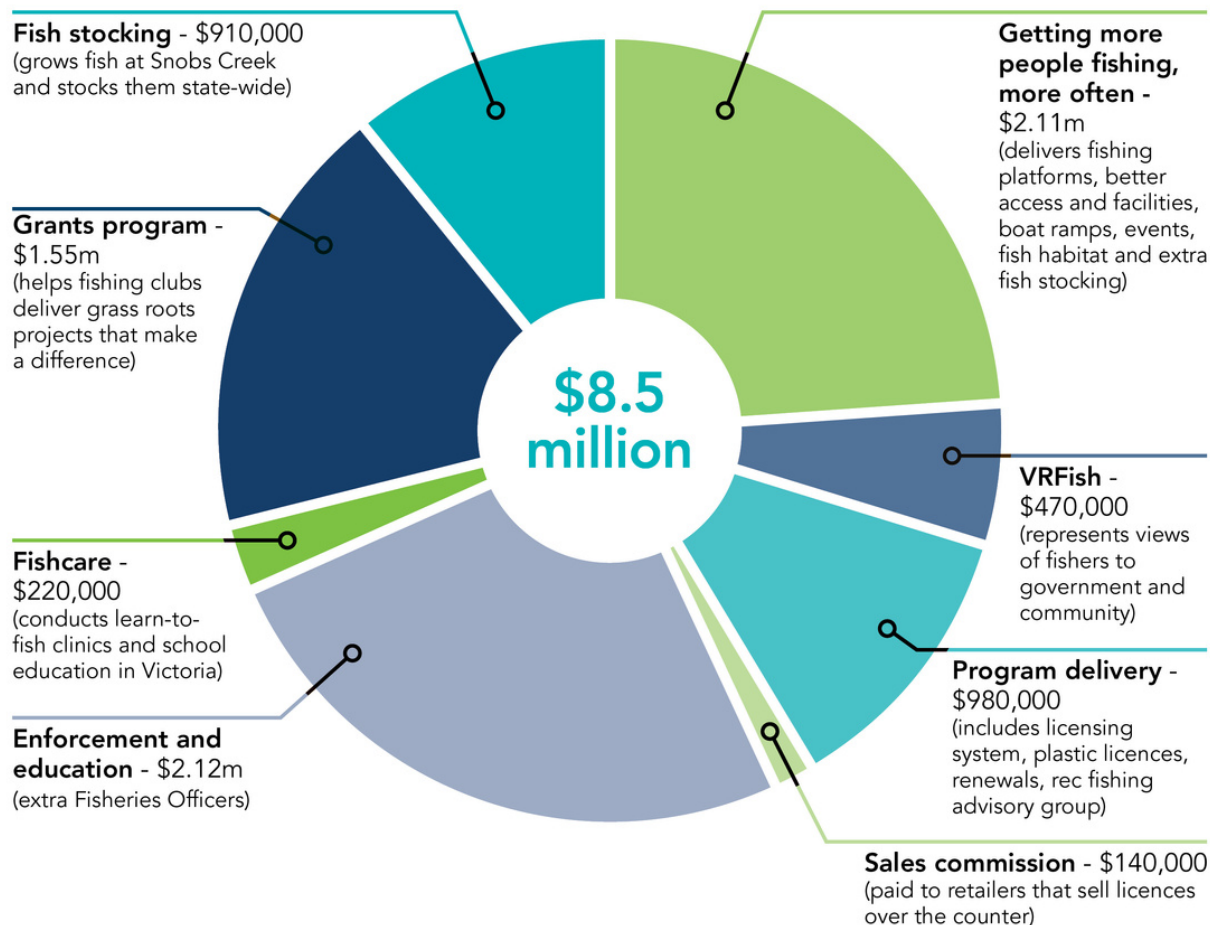


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# Recreational Fishing Licence Fees - Making fishing better today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Every year, approximately \$8.5 million of your recreational fishing licence fees are put to work making fishing even better by stocking more fish, improving access and facilities, enhancing fish habitat, and protecting fish stocks through more enforcement and education. Every single cent of your licence fees contributes to making Victoria the best state in Australia for fishing.



## Thank You!

On behalf of the Victorian Fisheries Authority and the State Government I would like to thank everyone that has bought a Recreational Fishing Licence in Victoria over the last 20 years. I am sure that every one of you has benefited from the many ways in which fees have been invested to improve fishing in Victoria and I encourage you all to continue buying a licence as it guarantees better fishing for future generations.

Travis Dowling, Chief Executive Officer  
Victorian Fisheries Authority



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