



Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment  
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Mr Graeme Dear  
Chair  
Victorian Fisheries Authority  
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Dear Graeme

## STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR THE VICTORIAN FISHERIES AUTHORITY

I am pleased to provide you with this updated Statement of Expectations (SOE) for the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA). This SOE applies for the period 19 March 2024 onwards until renewed.

This SOE introduces new expectations of the VFA by me as the Minister for Outdoor Recreation regarding **Professionalism and upholding Victorian Public Sector Processes**, and **Accountability and transparency** priorities (with these shown in *italics*). The title of expectation 2 has been adjusted to '**Outcomes for Traditional Owners**'. It introduces a new expectation for delivering a plan for commercial fishing rights for Traditional Owners. The title of expectation 10 has been adjusted to '**Planning and Reporting**'. It makes no change to the expectations of the VFA otherwise set by the former Minister for Outdoor Recreation, which are unchanged from those stated in the previous SOE which applied from 1 July 2022.

### Legislative context

As Minister for Outdoor Recreation, I am responsible for administering the *Victorian Fisheries Authority Act 2016* and the *Fisheries Act 1995*. This SOE should be read within the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in these Acts and other associated regulations.

This SOE should also be read in the context of any other legislative or non-legislative obligations on the VFA, such as the *Fisheries Regulations 2019*.

### Expectations and Priorities

The Victorian Government is committed to the sustainable management of Victoria's fisheries resources. Since the VFA was established, I commend it for improving the diversity and accessibility of commercial and recreational fishing by developing its cultural, social and economic value.

As you are aware, I am committed to continuous improvement in Victoria's fisheries management. To deliver this, I have set out the following strategic priorities and expectations

for the VFA. These priorities focus on strategic matters I consider necessary to continue to promote best practice in fisheries management.

### **1. Professionalism and upholding Victorian Public Sector processes**

Professionalism and upholding Victorian public sector processes are essential elements of maintaining the integrity and efficiency of government operations in departments and public sector entities. An organisation is defined by its ethics, behaviours and culture. A good workplace balance of all 3 can improve morale, boost productivity and improve an organisation's reputation.

*I expect the VFA to adhere to and promote public sector values in all that it does.*

### **2. Outcomes for Traditional Owners**

The Victorian Government has long recognised that Aboriginal people have a strong and enduring connection to country and our fisheries management practices must adapt to reflect this. I expect that the VFA continues to actively engage with Aboriginal Victorians in appropriate and meaningful ways, focusing on sustainable fisheries management, recognition of Aboriginal customary fishing rights for Recognised Traditional Owner Groups and improving economic opportunities for all Aboriginal people in fishing, boating and related industries.

*I request the VFA (together with Traditional Owners) develop a plan for commercial fishing opportunities for Traditional Owners and provide the plan to me by 30 July 2024.*

### **3. Encouraging more women to get involved in boating and recreational fishing**

While the participation of women and girls in recreational fishing and boating in Victoria has increased, they remain in a significant minority in these activities in Victoria. The Victorian Government remains committed to increasing the number of women and girls participating in sport and active recreation, from grassroots through to senior leadership roles.

I expect the VFA to continue to consult and work with, amongst others, the Women in Recreational Fishing and Boating (WIRFAB) network to elevate the voice and profile of women to promote the increased participation of women and girls in recreational fishing and boating. I expect that the VFA will actively seek opportunities to communicate and promote to the broader community activities and initiatives that encourage the greater participation of women and girls.

### **4. Delivering for both commercial and recreational fishers**

I expect the VFA to continue working with the Victorian seafood industry to optimise Victoria's fisheries and aquaculture industries and to actively engage with commercial and

recreational fishers, aquaculture licence holders and Traditional Owner groups who have a direct interest in fishing and in decisions that affect their fishing entitlements.

I expect the VFA to continue exploring opportunities to support innovation in Victoria's commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors. In consultation with industry and the Aquatic Strategic Action Group, I expect the VFA over the next two years to investigate opportunities to increase consumer access to local markets, improve consumers' understanding of local products, and support seafood supply chain value-adding and diversification.

To ensure the exchange of ideas and facilitate effective dialogue, I expect the VFA to continue its engagement with the recreational fishing sector and seek feedback from fishers on topics to allow the VFA to invest in priority areas, make informed choices about improving recreational fishing opportunities across the State, and identify information and knowledge gaps, including research and data needs.

I also expect the VFA to continue to deliver the priorities outlined in the *Victorian Recreational Boating Strategy 2021 – 2030* for recreational boaters across the State. In keeping with the Government's commitment to establish the Better Boating Fund as the mechanism through which to invest revenue raised from marine licensing and boat registration fees into improving boating safety and facilities, I expect the VFA to ensure transparency on how the fund is used.

## **5. Promoting environmental sustainability**

To ensure the VFA's primary objective of sustainably managing Victoria's aquatic resources is met, I expect periodic updates on the status of key Victorian fish stocks to be prepared and made publicly available. I also expect that existing marine, freshwater and aquaculture management plans continue to be implemented and routinely reviewed and for the VFA to develop new fishery management plans and strategies as the need arises.

I expect the VFA to continue to increase the awareness and understanding that all Victorians have a part to play in achieving sustainable and responsible use of Victoria's fisheries resources.

## **6. Developing a partnership approach to safety and regulation**

Safety is paramount to both recreational boating and fishing and commercial fishing. I expect the VFA to continue its efforts to collaborate with state-level agencies whose fishing, boating and enforcement responsibilities overlap those of the VFA, or where the VFA can provide assistance, knowledge and advice. I also expect that the VFA continues to foster strong relationships at the national level with other fisheries management and enforcement agencies.

## **7. Stakeholder consultation, engagement and education**

I expect the VFA to pursue genuine engagement, partnership and participation with all of its stakeholder groups. To ensure that the VFA has an ongoing understanding of the changing needs and priorities of commercial fishers, aquaculture businesses, recreational fishers and boaters, Traditional Owner groups and the broader community, I expect the VFA's focus of consultation and engagement to continue.

In recent years the VFA has made substantial progress in providing opportunities for all people of all abilities and all backgrounds to experience fishing and be involved in events and activities. I expect the VFA to continue to support diversity and inclusion by removing barriers that may deter people from participating in fishing and boating.

I expect the VFA to continue its focus on stewardship and education across the breadth of its stakeholders over the life of this SOE. Initiatives should be targeted at the needs of the VFA's stakeholders and implemented in an accessible way that acknowledges the diversity of stakeholders.

## **8. Improving infrastructure**

I expect the VFA to continue to facilitate urgent upgrades and continued maintenance of boating infrastructure through the Better Boating Fund, including delivery of the high boat ramp renewals identified in the Victorian Boating Strategy, such as Kirk Point and Lake Buffalo.

While these upgrades and maintenance works of boating infrastructure are taking place, the VFA should continue to ensure that impacts to recreational boaters are minimised as much as possible.

## **9. Accountability and transparency**

Transparency is a critical element of good practice. Decision making processes should be clear and visible. At the same time, the administration of regulation should be transparent and subject to public scrutiny through effective performance reporting.

I expect the VFA to remain committed to strengthening stakeholder relationships to ensure involvement in fisheries management and boating-related decision-making processes. To this end, I expect that the information is accessible, clear and easily understood and available in a timely manner on the VFA website. I also expect the VFA to continue utilising its social media platforms as key avenues to ensure stakeholders and the community have access to accurate and up-to-date information.

## **10. Planning and reporting**

I request the VFA include all other expectations, *including new expectations regarding Outcomes for Traditional Owners*, in the VFA annual business plans and include milestones for when VFA will meet these expectations.

I further request that the VFA, in conjunction with the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, undertake a review of the expectations in this letter as part of their annual reporting obligations and advise me if there are any refinements to recommend.

Yours sincerely



**Steve Dimopoulos MP**  
**Member for Oakleigh**  
**Minister for Outdoor Recreation**

19/03/2024