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The Hon Melissa Horne Minister for Fishing and Boating 1 Spring St MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Minister Horne

2020-2022 Statement of Expectations for the Victorian Fisheries Authority

Thank you for your letter setting out your Statement of Expectations (SOE) for the Victorian Fisheries Authority (SOE) for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022.

This letter confirms the VFA's commitment to achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in the administration and enforcement of regulation and acknowledges the Victorian Government's program to reduce the red tape affecting Victorian businesses, organisations and the community.

This letter outlines how the VFA intends to achieve the key elements of governance and operational performance you have identified as priorities for improvement over the life of this SOE. It sets out our improvement strategies, initiatives and performance targets to meet your expectations of the VFA as the primary regulator responsible for managing Victoria's fisheries resources to ensure their ongoing sustainability.

I acknowledge that your SOE and this response will be published on the VFA website.

Our plan to meet the SOE improvement priorities

1. Timeliness

The VFA acknowledges your expectation to continue its work in improving and enhancing its systems and online capability to create a better user experience through efficient online administrative processes.

The VFA will undertake to replace the paper-based administration of commercial fishing licence processes with an online form submission and approval process. While the system is in development, the VFA will use the VFA website to provide clear guidance on the expected timelines for processing forms and requests associated with commercial fishing.

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it continue to expand its use of electronic catch and effort reporting in the commercial fishing sector to reduce the time, cost and administrative burden associated with manual reporting and processing of catch and effort data. The Vic-eCatch system was successfully implemented in the commercial abalone, rock lobster and giant crab fisheries in 2020. Over the life of this SOE, the VFA will expand the system into the scallop dive, sea urchin, octopus and pipi fisheries. The VFA will also continue to work with the commercial fishing sector to develop a user-friendly and informative platform from which fishers can access their fishing data.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectation to continue improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the recreational fishing licensing (RFL) system. The VFA will continue to expand the network of RFL agents thus removing the need for manual submission of paper-based RFL agent sales data, with an aim to have all agents using the online platform in the future. To further increase efficiencies and reduce resource waste, the VFA will commence a program to phase out paper-based and plastic RFL's and replace with digital licences that can be stored on and accessed from mobile devices. The VFA will also create an efficiency by phasing out paper-based RFL expiry reminders, which will be replaced by emails.



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The VFA further acknowledges your expectation for continued useability improvements to be made to the existing recreational fishing apps: VicRLTag, GoFishVic and Rec Fishing Guide, to create a better experience for our recreational fishers. The VFA will enhance the useability of the VicRLTag and explore the replacement of plastic tags with a digital version. The VFA will also consider integrating the VicRLTag and GoFishVic apps to benefit from existing features in each and simplify reporting for fishers and explore options to create a more interactive user experience in the Rec Fishing Guide app.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Replace the paper-based, resource intensive administration of commercial fishing licence processes with an online form submission and approval process	 Scoping of requirements completed by 30 June 2021
Provide clear guidelines on the expected timelines for processing commercial fishing forms and requests	 VFA website updated by 30 December 2020
Continue to transition Victoria's commercial fisheries to the Vic-eCatch system	 Commercial scallop dive, sea urchin, octopus and pipi fisheries transitioned to the Vic-eCatch system by 30 June 2022
Continue to enhance and improve data availability for commercial fishers currently using the Vic-eCatch system	 Vic-eCatch data availability enhancement completed by 30 December 2020
Continue improving the efficiency and cost- effectiveness of the recreational fishing licensing (RFL) system	 Transition 95% of RFL sales online by 30 June 2022 Program to phase out paper and plastic RFL's commenced by 30 June 2022 Paper-based RFL expiry reminder notices phased out by 15 March 2021
Continue to enhance existing e-capability by improving the user experience of the VicRLTag, GoFishVic and Rec Fishing Guide apps.	 Useability of the VicRLTag enhanced and consideration of digital replacement for plastic tags by 30 June 2021 Integration of VicRLTag and GoFishVic apps scoped by 30 June 2021 Options to improve the Rec Fishing Guide app identified annually

2. Risk-based strategies

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it builds on its use of risk-based approaches across the organisation to ensure that priorities are set appropriately, and activities are strategically focused. The VFA also acknowledges your expectation that it consistently improves its methodology of data collection to inform risk-based strategy development and reporting and continues to use a risk-based approach in the enforcement of regulation.

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it delivers an annual stock assessment and reporting cycle for Victoria's quota and non-quota marine and estuarine fisheries and stocks and will commit to improving the process for assessing non-quota species and fisheries. The VFA will publish on its website annual stock assessment reports for quota fisheries, including abalone, rock lobster, giant crab, pipi and octopus and an annual *Victorian Stock Status Report* for non-quota species.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectations relating to the management of Victoria's freshwater species and will improve its data collection and monitoring programs to enable meaningful targets to be established to measure native freshwater fish populations.

The VFA will continue to deliver *the Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan 2018 – 2028*, including the collection of baseline data on native fish populations to underpin the development of a harvest strategy by 2023. The VFA will also continue to deliver the *Native Fish Report Card* program to keep the community updated about the state of native fish in Victorian rivers. Further, to ensure rebuilding and replenishing of our priority native fish stocks, the VFA acknowledges your expectations that the stocking targets outlined in the Victorian Government's *Target One Million – Phase Two* program are met and that a new native fish hatchery is built in northern Victoria to expand the breeding and stocking of warm-water native fish species including Murray cod, golden perch, silver perch and freshwater catfish.

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it continues to implement an intelligence-informed risk-based compliance model to ensure investigations are focused on illegal activities with the greatest potential for impact on the sustainability of Victoria's fishery resources. The VFA will maintain its established processes of undertaking a strategic assessment every two years to identify compliance risks, and regularly analysing data from 13Fish calls and compliance inspections.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectation that the confidence the community has in the VFA is upheld by ensuring a base model of cover across all fisheries and over peak holiday and activity periods.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Deliver an annual cycle of fish stock assessment and reporting and continue to improve the assessment framework process and reporting of non-quota species and fisheries, including publication of all reports on the VFA website	 Quota species: Stock assessment reports for the abalone, rock lobster, giant crab, pipi and octopus fisheries published annually on the VFA website in alignment with the quota seasons Non-quota species: Victorian Stock Status Report updated and published by January, annually Fishery Report Cards provided to industry by February, annually
Under the Freshwater Fishery Management Plan 2018-2028, collect fish population health and recreational fishing information to enable the development of harvest strategies for priority recreational fisheries	 Baseline data collected on native fish populations to underpin harvest strategy development underway with progress reported annually Draft harvest strategy, which includes predetermined triggers for high-risk fisheries on track to be completed by 2023.
Continue the Native Fish Report Card program Rebuild and replenish stocks of our priority native fish species	 Native Fish Report Cards produced by 30 June, annually <i>Target One Million Phase Two</i> stocking targets achieved by 30 June, annually Native fish hatchery build completed by August 2021, operational by November 2021 and producing fish by 2022
Continue to implement an intelligence- informed risk-based compliance model	 Biennial strategic assessment to identify emerging risks to the sustainability of aquatic resources undertaken by 30 December 2020 and 30 December 2022 Analyses of 13Fish calls to identify common themes and locations in the calls undertaken quarterly Enforcement actions taken in recreational and commercial fisheries reviewed and reported annually
Maintain community confidence and create a general deterrence	 Base model of cover maintained across all fisheries and over holiday and peak activity periods and reported annually

3. Compliance-related assistance and advice

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it continues to provide comprehensive, straightforward and easily accessible information and deliver its high standard of community education. The VFA will continue to utilise traditional and social media to deliver clear and easily accessible information to the community and develop fisheries products designed to engage and inform.

The VFA further acknowledges your expectation that it continues its education programs aimed at promoting stewardship within priority communities and fostering cross-cultural understanding of fishing and sustainable resource use. The VFA will continue to ensure that educational programs and community events are accessible, inclusive and acknowledge the diversity of the VFA's stakeholders.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectation that it continues to identify innovative ways to engage and make information for commercial fishers and aquaculture businesses more accessible and easily digestible.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Continue to utilise traditional and emerging social media platforms to deliver key information about fisheries compliance and public safety issues to the community	 VFA Fisheries Education Facebook page for school and family audiences developed by October 2020
Continue to develop, review and refine fisheries products to improve the recreational fisher's understanding of regulations and legislation	 Rock Fishing Safety brochures in English, Vietnamese, Chinese, Pashto, Dari and Farsi produced by December 2020 Bite-sized Fishing Guides in English, Vietnamese and Chinese and educational trailer displays – bi-lingual English/Chinese and English/ Vietnamese completed by December 2020
Build on previous work promoting stewardship within priority communities and fostering cross-cultural understanding of fishing and sustainable resource use	 50% of participants in the Schools Education Program from priority communities achieved annually Tailored education to assist newly arrived communities understand recreational fishing rules undertaken through the <i>Fishing for Culture</i> program and reported annually
Continue educational programs and events that recognise the VFA's diverse stakeholders and that are implemented in an accessible and inclusive way Identify improved methods and avenues to	 Through the <i>Target One Million</i> program, family- orientated fishing days to encourage all Victorians of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to give fishing a go are conducted and reported annually Commercial fishing guide and supplements for all licence
deliver essential information to commercial fishers	classes published and update annually as required

4. Incentive-based regulation

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it continues collecting data on fisher behaviour and fishing activities to inform opportunities to reduce or redirect enforcement effort. The VFA also acknowledges your expectation to continue the expansion of the vessel monitoring system (VMS) program to commercial fisheries as specified in *the Fisheries Regulations 2019*.

The VFA further acknowledges your expectation that it examines a tiered infringement system that will establish tiered penalties for breaches of size and catch limits according to the circumstances in which the offence was committed.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Continue to expand the roll-out of VMS units across commercial fishing vessels	 VMS units operational in commercial fisheries specified in the <i>Fisheries Regulations 2019</i> Abalone, rock lobster, giant crab by 1 Jul 2020 Corner Inlet Fishery by 1 Aug 2020 Sea urchin, banded morwong, trawl, Western Port/Port Phillip Bay, Octopus by 1 Nov 2020 Trial of VMS units in the eel and pipi fisheries completed by 30 June 2021
Develop an infringement system that enables tiered infringement penalties for breaches of size and catch limits under the <i>Fisheries Act</i> <i>1995</i>	 Proposed model for setting tiered infringements developed by 30 June 2021

5. Cooperation amongst regulators

The VFA acknowledges your expectation to build a more effective and efficient compliance management system across government. The VFA will continue to collaborate on a national level with other fisheries management and enforcement agencies to identify good practice, share lessons learnt and collaborate on data collection projects. The VFA will also continue to collaborate with state-level agencies whose responsibilities overlap those of the VFA, or where the VFA can provide assistance, knowledge and advice.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectation for effective collaboration with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Parks Victoria (PV), Better Boating Victoria (BBV) and local governments to ensure the successful delivery of the Victorian Government's *Target One Million Phase Two* program.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Continue educational programs and events that recognise the VFA's diverse stakeholders and that are implemented in an accessible and inclusive way	 National engagement through the Fisheries Managers Network and Australian Fisheries Managers Forum undertaken and reported annually Collaboration with state and national crime fighting entities undertaken and reported annually Australian Fisheries Crime Prevention Framework completed 30 June 2021
Facilitate data sharing and collection amongst relevant agencies	 Contribution to the national Status of Australian Fish Stocks reporting processes to deliver updated reports every two years Collaboration with CSIRO in national shark research with progress reported annually
Continue collaboration with state level regulators and agencies	 In support of Game Management Victoria, intelligence services and enforcement support provided In support of Maritime Safety Victoria, inspections to ensure compliance with maritime safety legislation and promote safe fishing activities undertaken Contribution to Victoria's All Hazards, All Emergencies approach to emergency management achieved State Emergency Management Plan and State Shark Hazard Plan responsibilities met Collaboration with DELWP on emergency management, particularly shark hazard management, undertaken

	 VFA and DELWP MOU detailing collaboration arrangements to minimise protected species interactions developed by November 2020
Continue collaboration with DELWP, EPA, PV,	• Target One Million Phase Two election commitments
BBV and local governments to deliver Target	targets met and reported annually
One Million Phase Two election commitments	

6. Stakeholder consultation and engagement

The VFA acknowledges your expectation for it to continue its strong focus of consultation and engagement to ensure a clear understanding of the needs and priorities of commercial fishers, aquaculture businesses, recreational fishers and the community. The VFA will continue to build strong collaborative relationships through regular engagement with representative bodies and stakeholder groups.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectation that it pursues genuine engagement, partnership and participation with Indigenous Victorians who have an interest in fishery management issues.

The VFA will also continue to support the community by delivering and supporting events that are aimed at encouraging participation in recreational fishing and maintain a focus on continuing to remove barriers that may hinder people of all backgrounds and abilities from enjoying all that Victoria's recreational fishing has to offer.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Continue to build strong collaborative relationships with representative bodies through regular engagement	 Regular meetings undertaken with Seafood Industry Victoria and the Aquatic Strategic Action Group to collaborate on shared strategic priorities for Victoria's seafood industry Regular meeting undertaken of the State-wide Recreational Roundtable to ensure collaboration on shared strategic priorities for the recreational fishing community Two meetings per year between VFA Enforcement and (individually) Seafood Industry Victoria, VRFish and the Victorian Multicultural Commission undertaken
Continue to actively engage with Traditional Owner groups who have an interest in fishery management issues	 VFA Aboriginal Engagement Strategy developed by 31 March 2021 Review of the VFA Aboriginal Fishing Strategy completed and a redeveloped strategy published by 30 June 2022 Indigenous Victorians employment targets for the new native fish hatchery in Shepparton met by 30 June 2022 Wallpolla Stocking Trials 'Culture Based Fisheries' pilot complete by 30 Dec 2021
Continue to deliver events are aimed at providing a safe and enjoyable environment for people to learn about fishing and focussed on all-abilities, families and multicultural communities	 Five Fishing for All events held annually Five Vic Fish Kids events held annually

7. Accountability and transparency

The VFA acknowledges that to ensure good regulatory practice, the administration of regulation should be transparent and subject to public scrutiny through effective performance reporting. The VFA will remain committed to ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of consultation processes and have access to clear information through the VFA website to inform them of how decisions are made. The VFA acknowledges your

expectation that it utilises the VFA website and social media platforms as key avenues to ensure that stakeholders and the community are provided with accurate and up-to-date information.

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that VFA demonstrate to the community that it can meet its primary objective to sustainably manage Victoria's aquatic resources. The VFA will continue to report annually on the status of Victoria's key fish stocks and ensure reports, including stock assessment reports for quota managed fisheries and the *Victorian Fish Stock Status Report*, are published on the VFA in a time appropriate manner. The VFA further acknowledges your expectation that it continues to implement existing management plans and harvest strategies and for new management plans and strategies to be developed over the life of this SOE.

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it, where possible, publish outcomes of enforcement activities to enhance public understanding of fisheries compliance and increase transparency regarding the way the VFA administers and enforces regulations.

The VFA also acknowledges your expectation that it shows continued growth as a mature, stand-alone organisation through the development and implementation of mechanisms used to drive and support good governance. The VFA will continue to implement the *VFA Governance Framework* and develop a risk management framework, a workforce strategy and an asset management strategy to ensure the VFA has effective internal accountability measures in place.

As part of its commitment to delivering good governance, the VFA will observe the reporting requirements described in the VFA Act 2016 and review the efficiency and effectiveness of the cost recovery model used for the collection of fees and levies in the commercial fishing sector.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Remain committed to maintaining an effective and productive consultation and engagement process that involves all stakeholders	 Progress against the VFA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2019-2021 reviewed annually Review of VFA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2019- 2021 undertaken by January 2021 VFA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2021 – 2023 drafted by 31 March 2021
Ensure the VFA website and social media platforms provide accurate and up-to-date information	 The VFA website is reviewed to remain fit for purpose by 30 June 2021, then reviewed annually VFA's social media reach is reviewed annually
Ensure that the VFA website provides timely and transparent information to encourage stakeholders to participate in fishery management decision-making processes	 Outcomes of consultative processes on the VFA's website, including submissions and outcomes, in a timely manner published
Continue to report on the status of Victoria's key fish stocks and ensure reports are published on the VFA website in a time appropriate manner	 Stock assessment reports for quota fisheries are published on the VFA website annually (aligned with respective quota seasons) Victorian Fish Stock Status Report published on the VFA website by January, annually. Fishery Report Cards provided to industry by February, annually Completed scientific reports are published on the VFA website in a timely manner
Continue to deliver existing marine and aquaculture management plans and strategies, and develop new plans and strategies as required	 New Giant Crab Fishery Management Plan drafted by December 2021 Octopus Fishery Management Plan and Harvest Strategy drafted by 30 June 2022 Corner Inlet Fishery Management Plan drafted by December 2021

	• Review of <i>Victorian Aquaculture Strategy</i> undertaken by 30 June 2021
Continue to implement the Freshwater Fishery Management Plan 2018-2028	VAGO actions implemented as required
Continue to deliver priority actions and measures in the Victorian Wild Trout Strategy (2020-2025) Develop a Native Fish Stocking Strategy	 Phase 3 of the Wild Trout Management Plan implemented, which delivers on nine priority actions under the Victorian Wild Trout Strategy Native Fish Stocking Strategy drafted for consultation by
Develop an <i>RFL Strategic Plan</i> that guides RFL	 Oraft <i>RFL Strategic Plan</i> finalised by early 2021
investment to ensure alignment with stakeholder expectations	
Develop a recreational snapper fishery harvest strategy	 Recreational Snapper Fishery Harvest Strategy Pilot commenced by 30 December 2020 Recreational Snapper Fishery Harvest Strategy delivered by 30 September 2021
Deliver a recovery plan for the Gippsland Lakes recreational fishery	Gippsland Lakes Recreational Fishery Recovery Plan delivered by 30 December 2020
Continue to enhance public understanding of fisheries compliance	 Compliance information published on the VFA website on a quarterly basis Explanatory details of relevant enforcement outcomes published on VFA education-specific social media platforms
Reporting requirements described in legislation are adhered to by the VFA	 Annual Report published Performance against the SOE, targets prescribed in the Victorian Government's <i>Budget Paper No. 3 – Service Delivery</i> and the Victorian Government's election commitments published annually
Continue to build the VFA as an effective and innovative organisation in which processes and systems are modern, cost efficient, fit for purpose, accessible, secure and enable collaboration and reporting	 Strategies and plans developed in accordance with the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2019 – 2024 by 30 June 2022 Compliance testing of procurement, contract management, recruitment and IT undertaken in accordance with the Corporate Services Strategic Plan 2020-2021 by December 2021
Continue the ongoing transition to a mature stand-alone organisation	 Risk Management Framework updated and implemented by 30 June 2021 Workforce Strategy to support delivery of our strategic objectives developed by 30 June 2022 Asset Management Strategy revised and Asset Management Plans for major assets developed by 30 June 2021 Fraud and Corruption Control Policy fully implemented to ensure consistency with Victorian Government requirements
Continue to implement the VFA Governance Framework to achieve maturity in all governance principles in the framework	• Progress in the development and implementation of the mechanisms used to drive and support good governance reviewed and assessed annually
Review current cost recovery arrangements and investigate alternative models in consultation with the commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors	 Discussion paper for consultation drafted by 30 June 2021

8. Clear and concise regulatory activities

The VFA acknowledges your expectation that it will continue to ensure that its regulatory practices are efficient and do not impose an unnecessary burden on regulated parties nor the community and for it to continue developing and delivering an annual *Education and Enforcement Action Plan*.

The VFA acknowledges your expectation for it to deliver changes to Crown land access that will enable camping accessibility on licensed Crown land and for clear information to be provided to recreational users about how and where to access and use Crown land.

The VFA commits to continuing work to explore opportunities that support innovation in Victoria's commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors, in consultation with industry and the Aquatic Strategic Action Group, investigate opportunities to increase consumer access to local markets, improve consumers' understanding of local products, and support seafood supply chain value-adding and diversification.

Improvement strategy	VFA performance target
Continue to deliver an annual Education and Enforcement Action Plan	• Education and Enforcement Action Plan delivered by 30 June, annually
Deliver changes to Crown land access to enable camping accessibility on licensed Crown land	 Land Act 1958 amended to remove the prohibition on camping on Crown Land River Frontage and 50 new access points created by December 2021
Investigate opportunities to increase consumer access to local markets, improve consumers' understanding of local products, and support seafood supply chain value- adding and diversification	 Small sales permit trial evaluated and options for extension into the future considered by 30 June 2022 Central and Western Zone Octopus Exploratory permits evaluated and options for the future considered by 30 June 2022 Review of supply chain project finalised by 1 October 2020 In consultation with industry/ASAG, options to support seafood supply chain value-adding, diversification, and improving domestic market opportunities explored by 30 June 2022

Reporting and evaluation

The VFA will report on progress against these SOE performance targets as part of its annual reporting process, covering:

- current baseline levels for performance targets set in this SOE (where relevant); and
- activities to be undertaken to reach the performance targets and improvements set out in this SOE.

The SOE performance targets will also be incorporated into the VFA's Annual Business Plan, and your SOE and this response will be published on the VFA's website upon approval.

I look forward to reporting against its achievements of the VFA over the life of this SOE.

Yours sincerely

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Travis Dowling Chief Executive Officer Victorian Fisheries Authority 14 /12 / 2020