



Your fishing  
licence fees  
at work

Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account

# STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

2021 - 2031

# VISION & PURPOSE OF THE RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENCE TRUST ACCOUNT (RFLTA)

*To invest in improving recreational fishing opportunities for all Victorians*

## INTRODUCTION

Victorians love to fish. Recreational fishing is estimated to contribute around \$2.3 billion per year to the Victorian economy and creates a range of employment and income opportunities.

Recreational fishing also provides major social benefits to Victorians, particularly in regional Victoria. Research has found that recreational fishing can promote general health and well-being by connecting fishers to their families, friends, the natural environment and the community at large.

Recreational fishing is diverse in its method (angling, diving, potting etc), location (marine, fresh, land-based), motivations (e.g. harvest, catch and release, non-catch experiences) and expectations. Therefore, a strategic investment plan is needed to best meet the needs of recreational fishers using available Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL) fee funding.

A [review of Victoria's RFL system](#) was conducted by in late 2019 recommending that a consolidated strategic plan should be developed by the VFA in partnership with recreational fishing stakeholders across all RFLTA expenditures.

The key benefit of a strategic investment plan for RFL investment is a more transparent collaborative partnership between recreational fishing stakeholders and the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), which will enable the continued growth and improvement of recreational fishing opportunities for all Victorians.

The following strategic plan for RFL investment has been prepared in collaboration between the VFA and a working group of recreational fishing stakeholders including independent anglers, Native Fish Australia, Australian Trout Foundation, Fishcare Victoria, Future Fish, VRFish and the Chair of the RFL Trust Advisory Committee.

The draft plan was presented for public comment by the wider recreational fishing community in May, whereby submissions were received, considered and incorporated into the finalised plan which was published in June 2021.

For further information, please visit: <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/fishing-licence/your-fishing-licence-fees-at-work>



*Photo: Delatite River Instream Restoration Project - ATF - Funded from Better Fishing Fund*

## HISTORY OF THE RECREATIONAL LICENCE TRUST ACCOUNT (RFLTA)

The Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account (RFLTA) was established in 1999 through a partnership between Government and recreational fishers to utilise RFL funding to improve recreational fishing.

The key point behind the new RFL was that all revenue derived from licence sales would be paid into a dedicated Trust Account, that would only fund:

- > Improvements to recreational fishing; and
- > Direct costs and expenses incurred in the administration of the fund.

Initial revenue from licence fees with the establishment of the RFLTA was ~\$4.5 million annually. The great outcome and bonus of this new and recurrent licence fee being paid into a designated fund enabled additional investment with direct benefits for recreational fishers, in addition to existing recurrent funding. RFL revenue was also used to fund a voluntary buy-out of commercial (bay and inlet) fishing licences with >100 bought out overall. Later buy-outs, such as the closure of Lake Tyers and the removal of commercial inland licences were also funded. Recreational netting licences for inland waters were banned around the same time.

From year one, the RFLTA annually funded 10 newly created recreational Fisheries Officers, and education and information products. Other key items funded from the RFL were to VRFish which was established as the representative body for recreational fishers in 1995, and fish stocking. In 2009 a Grants Program was introduced to facilitate specific projects to be delivered by recreational fishers and non-government organisations to benefit recreational fishing. The Grants Program operated only annually, and only for large grants. The current small grants program that is open all-year round started about 2012.

Over the years, the RFLTA has also funded government initiatives such as Target One Million, which includes stocking programs, access and facilities development of new fishing waters and more recently, sustainable habitat and revegetation projects.



*Photo: Fishcare Victoria – Creating Sustainable Anglers Project – Funded by RFL Large Grant*

## CURRENT STATUS OF THE RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENCE TRUST ACCOUNT (RFLTA)

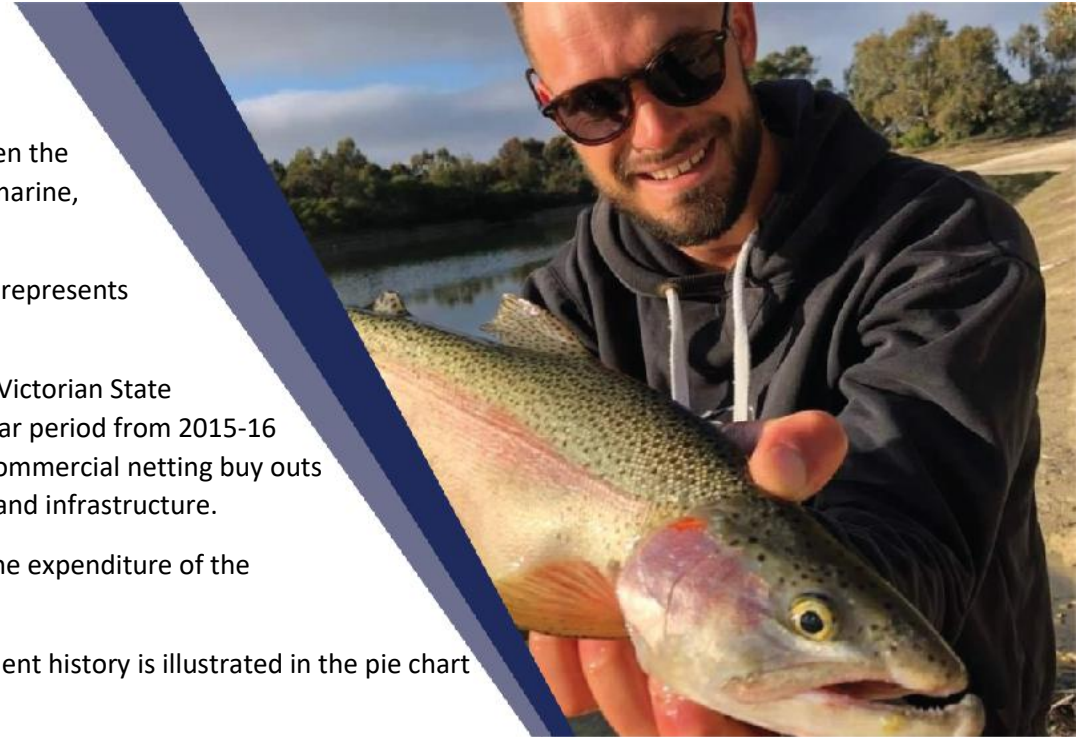
A Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL) is required for any individual between the ages of 18 to 70 years old or a holder of specified exemptions to fish in Victorian marine, estuarine and inland waters.

The current revenue derived from the sale of RFL's is approximately \$8M and this represents the purchase of 268,000 to 305,000 RFL's.

An additional \$70 M of funding has been invested into recreational fishing by the Victorian State Government (i.e. Victorian taxpayer) from consolidated revenue over the eight year period from 2015-16 to 2022-23 equating to around \$8.75M per year. This funding has been used for commercial netting buy outs in Port Phillip, Corio Bay and Gippsland Lakes, fish stocking, Arcadia fish hatchery and infrastructure.

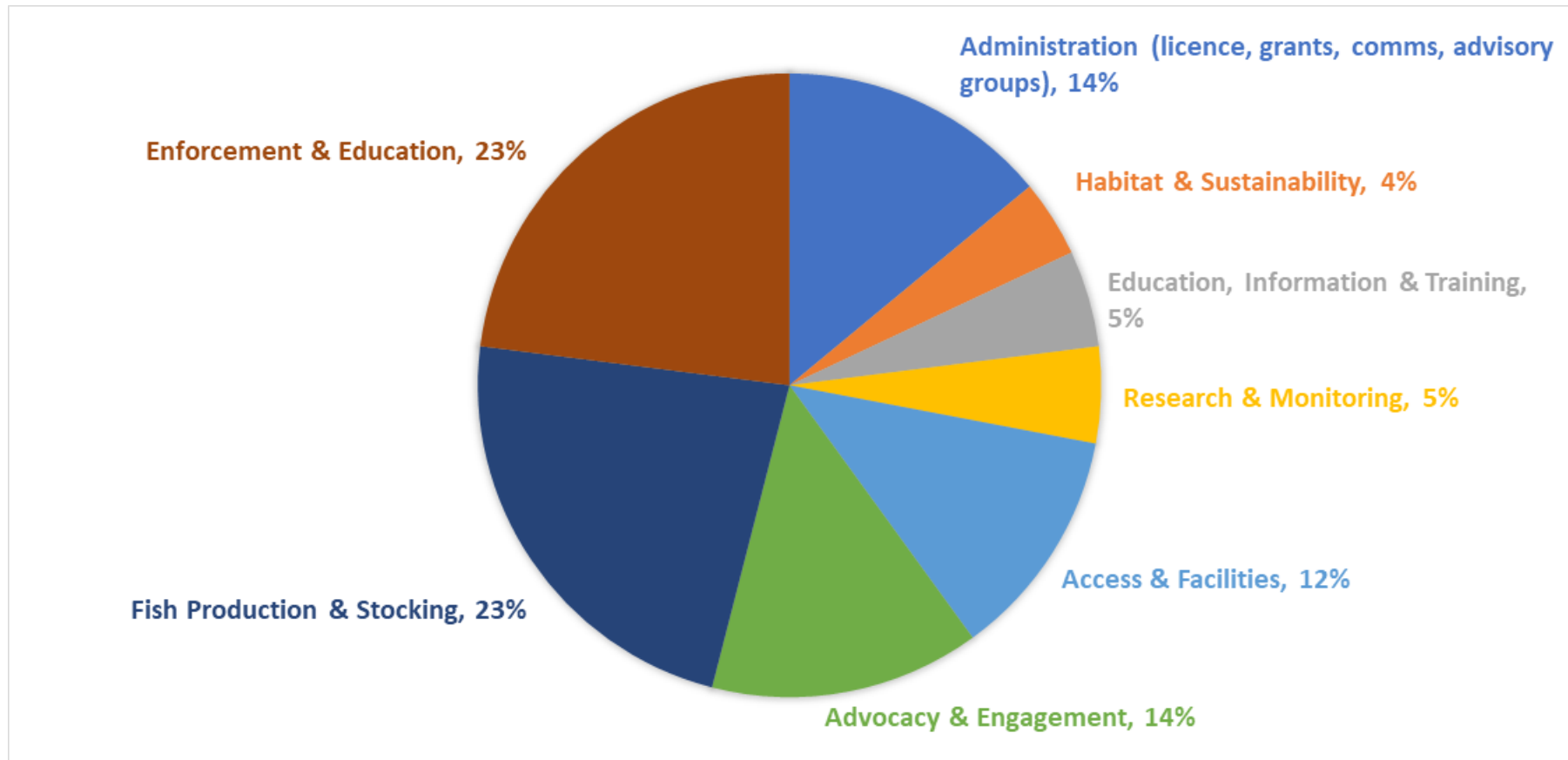
The Minister for Fisheries and Boating is the prescribed Minister responsible for the expenditure of the RFLTA funds on an annual basis.

The current priority investment areas and 3-year average of recent RFLTA investment history is illustrated in the pie chart below.



*Photo: Fishcare Victoria – Responsible Anglers Academy – Funded by RFL Large Grant*

## CURRENT 3 YEAR AVERAGE INVESTMENT RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENCE TRUST ACCOUNT (RFLTA)





Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account

# STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

2021 - 2031

*To invest in growing recreational fishing opportunities for all Victorians*



Photo: Native Fish Australia – Tim Curmi – Cod Angler Yarrowonga

## GUIDING INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES

- Recreational fishers are recognised as partners with VFA in the planning and implementing the growing of our fisheries
- RFLTA funds are invested in priority areas for direct benefit to Victorian recreational fishers
- Funds will be invested through active collaboration and partnerships with organisations and agencies to co-invest in priority investment areas
- All RFLTA funds will be allocated through a transparent and consultative process, with all expenditure and outcomes communicated to licence holders
- Recreational fishers and VFA will evaluate performance and deliverables across all RFLTA investment expenditure across all areas of RFLTA investment

# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES – PRIORITY INVESTMENT AREAS

INVESTMENT AREA	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
<b>1. Habitat &amp; Sustainability</b>	Promote healthy habitat and sustainable fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain, sustain and enhance the health of our waterways by delivering habitat restoration projects such as riparian and in-stream, seagrass and living shellfish, and artificial reef development restoration programs.</li> <li>Strategic investment in fisher-led fish habitat, threatened species and sustainability projects with an objective to leverage further investment from other funding sources and contribute to recreational fishing social license.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Fish Stocking</b>	Contribute to meeting recreational fish stocking requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to effective and informed fish stocking that meets the needs and expectations of recreational fishers.</li> <li>Assist in the involvement of recreational fishers in fish stocking processes including planning, release of fish, citizen science and communications.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Enforcement &amp; Resource Protection</b>	Contribute to effectively enforcing regulations, voluntary compliance and protecting our fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to enforcement officers to protect the recreational fishing resource.</li> <li>Contribute to a risk-based approach to recreational fishing enforcement and compliance priorities.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Education, Information &amp; Capacity Building</b>	Recreational fishers are a community of informed and responsible stewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support high voluntary compliance and safety by recreational fishers through timely, targeted, accessible and relevant information campaigns</li> <li>Deliver programs and projects that improve fishery understanding, social license for recreational fishing as well as encourage participation, environmental stewardship &amp; responsible fishing</li> </ul>
<b>5. Access &amp; Facilities</b>	Improve access and facilities for recreational fishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish accessible fishing locations and facilities, for the whole community, at new and existing waters</li> <li>Improve the fishing experience and amenity at fishing locations, such as through rod holders, fish cleaning stations, stiles, solar lights etc.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Research &amp; Development</b>	Improve the fishing experience for recreational fishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and improve the health of our fisheries by funding informed scientific, social and economic research and monitoring.</li> <li>Understand the participation pathways of recreational fishing to maximise participation, retention and engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Advocacy &amp; Representation</b>	Deliver best practice and accountable representation to all Victorian recreational fishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide effective representation and advocacy for recreational fishing issues and opportunities to the VFA and the Minister on behalf of a diverse recreational fishing sector - including women (WIRF), angling clubs and organisations, Traditional Owner organisations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) fishing communities.</li> </ul>

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES – MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

INVESTMENT AREA	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
<b>8. Licensing</b>	Grow RFL revenue and progress to a digital transformation of licensing voluntary fisher cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that would motivate more anglers to buy a recreational fishing licence</li> <li>Explore innovative ways of growing RFL revenue, including through promotion and other opportunities.</li> <li>Examine opportunities to further reduce RFL administration costs through use of new technology and other innovative approaches.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Project Grants</b>	Provide funding for projects and programs that grow recreational fishing opportunities for all Victorians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly identify recreational fisher’s priorities for RFL project grants</li> <li>Identify and invest in projects that have the greatest impact and establish evaluation and reporting systems to assess the outcomes of these projects</li> </ul>
<b>10. Communications</b>	Effectively communicate with every recreational fisher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain a current and up to date licensee database to enable direct communication with recreational fishing licence holders</li> <li>Provide clear, transparent and accessible communications to recreational fishing licence holders and the broader community on promotion of purchasing an RFL, RFL investment decisions and outcomes on those investments</li> </ul>
<b>11. Advisory Groups</b>	Engage expert industry and stakeholder representatives to expand the recreational fishing knowledge base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure advisory groups encompass the diverse recreational fishing sector including women in fishing, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities</li> <li>Examine opportunities to improve governance and oversight arrangements for total RFL investment, including for the roles and responsibilities of the RFL Trust Advisory Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>12. Governance</b>	Uphold best practice, accountable and transparent systems of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to ensure best practice governance and reporting of RFL Trust activities publicly</li> <li>Institute a system of continuous improvement of the implemented management systems</li> </ul>

### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

It’s your recreational fishery and we encourage you to get involved.

For further information, please visit: <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/fishing-licence/your-fishing-licence-fees-at-work>

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