

MARCH 2025

Recreational Fisheries Management Update

**Record Dusky
Flathead Stocking**

**Kingfish
Collaboration**

**More Habitat
Restoration**

**Have your say on
stocking 10 million
fish in 2025/2026**

**VFA Hatchery
Expansion**



Cover photo: Makaira Muscat with a stunning dusky flathead from Gippsland Lakes.



Contents

2025 / 2026 Stocking Plan – Have your say	4
2024-25 Stocking Program Updates	5
Kingfish management collaboration with NSW	6
\$2.5 million grants for habitat restoration	7
Record Dusky Flathead Stocking	8
New Estuary Perch Research – RFL Funded Project	9
Record stocking of Trout Cod and Macquarie Perch	10
Australian Trout Foundation - Livingston Creek Project – Trout fishers giving back!	11
Flathead Galaxias Rescue	12
RFL Grants Update	16
Native Fish Hatcheries – Capital Works	13
Conservation Hatchery Update	14
Snobs Creek Hatchery Update	15
Upcoming recreational fishing forums in Winter 2025	18
Better Boating Victoria - Project Updates	19



2025 / 2026 Stocking Plan – Have your say

The Victorian State Government is committed to stocking another 10 million fish in 2025/26 to improve recreational fishing opportunities and rebuild native fish populations.

Recreational fishers, angling clubs and associations are invited to provide their feedback on the **2025/26 Draft Fish Stocking Plan** which details the planned release of 10 million fish, across 12 species, into more than 244 locations in Victoria between July 2025 and June 2026.

The 2025/26 Draft Fish Stocking Plan is developed in conjunction with the recreational fishing community and over several decades of annual Vic Fish Stock consultation feedback and fisheries research.

Key highlights in the 2025-26 draft stocking include:

- Over 1 million native fish into Rocklands Reservoir
- Over 80 Family Fishing Lakes to be stocked with catchable rainbow trout in June and September school holidays
- Over 1 million fish into Lake Eildon, including 220,000 brown and rainbow trout
- 16 metro lakes and the Goulburn River to be stocked with stonker rainbow trout
- 800,000 native fish into Lake Eppalock
- Devilbend Reservoir brown trout increased from 10,000 to 15,000
- Lake Glenmaggie rainbow trout increased to 15,000, plus 2,000 brown trout
- Dusky flathead stocking in Gippsland Lakes, Bemm River and Mallacoota inlet
- Melton Reservoir and Campaspe River to receive a combined 355,000 native fish
- Goulburn River – Upstream of Kevington to be stocked with more trout cod
- Kiewa River to continue to receive 30,000 Macquarie perch and 20,000 trout cod
- Timbarra River bass doubled to 20,000
- Lake Elingamite bass increased to 15,000
- Merri river to be stocked with 10,000 estuary perch for the first time complementing river health initiatives
- Flooding Creek (Port of Sale) to receive 5,000 estuary perch
- Dunyak Moira first time stocking and to receive 10,000 golden perch each year
- Arcadia “fish out” Pondage to receive annual stocking of 100 on-grown cod
- Nursery Reservoir (Macedon) and Shadforth Reserve Island Pond to receive 2nd stocking of on grown rainbows in T3 holidays

To have your say on the 2025/26 Draft Fish Stocking Plan, please email your submissions to:

Mark Adams, Fisheries Manager
mark.adams@vfa.vic.gov.au

by Sunday 6th of April 2025.

2024-25 Stocking Program Updates

It has been an exciting year for Murray cod production & stocking, with over 4 million stocked across nearly 50 waterways in just 4 months. Our dedicated team has travelled more than 31,300 kilometres to ensure these iconic fish are thriving in their new homes.

Highlights of the 2024-25 stocking season include:

- **Lake Eildon:** A total of 880,000 fish have been stocked this season, including 450,000 Murray cod fingerlings and 300,000 golden perch.
- **Rocklands Reservoir:** Over 570,000 Murray cod have been released, alongside 93,000 golden perch. More golden perch (yellas) to be stocked over the month of March and into April.
- **New Introductions:** For the first time, a few select waterways have received trout cod and Macquarie perch. The Campaspe River now boasts 26,000 trout cod, while the Kiewa River has been stocked with 30,000 trout cod and 30,000 Macquarie perch.
- **Victoria's Far East and West:** In the far east, Flooding Creek near Sale has received 5,000 estuary perch fingerlings, and in the far west, the Moyne River has welcomed 10,000 estuary perch.

These efforts represent an important contribution toward the VFA's continued effort to enhance our fisheries and ensure the future of our native fish populations.

SEASON SUMMARY*

Species	Stocked
Australian bass	137,500
Brown trout	371,250
Brown trout (ex broodstock)	1,973
Chinook salmon	85,830
Dusky flathead	55,540
Estuary perch	133,500
Golden perch	2,484,390
Macquarie perch	99,890
Murray cod	4,006,550
Rainbow trout	358,870
Rainbow trout (ex broodstock)	3,279
Rainbow trout (ongrown)	48,510
Silver perch	522,500
Tiger trout	10,000
Trout cod	140,970
Total	8,355,552

*As of March 2025.





Kingfish management collaboration with NSW

Victorian fishers have been graced with one of the best Yellowtail Kingfish seasons this Summer over the last few years!

And the next few seasons could get even better thanks to a new collaboration between Victorian Fisheries Authority and New South Wales to work together on the best fisheries management for the sought after species.

Victorian 'Kingies' favour the warmer weather in late December through to March, making for a trophy catch over the summertime in Victoria. Given Kingfish travel large distances between eastern Australian states, with populations spanning across New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, it makes sense that fisheries managers and scientists across jurisdictions work together to get the best outcomes from the species.

The VFA recognise the value of Kingfish for all recreational fishers and are committed to delivering the best management initiatives for cross jurisdictional Kingfish populations.

\$2.5 million grants for habitat restoration

Stream 2 grants open for applications!

In 2022, the Victorian Government committed \$2.5 million to improve fish habitats across Victoria's marine, estuarine and freshwater fisheries as part of the *Go Fishing Victoria* plan. This provides recreational fishers with the opportunity to involve themselves with the community in restoration initiatives, enhancing the environment for all Victorian fishers. There are two streams of grants available for angling clubs:

Stream 1: Empowering recreational fishers to improve local fish habitat (community led projects up to \$50,000)

Stream 1 projects will deliver small-scale works to improve local fish habitat works alongside waterways such as native vegetation planting, weed control, erosion control, fencing (to keep livestock out) on public or private land. Stream 1 will help recreational fishers get involved, build capacity and establish partnerships with other fish habitat partners and land managers.

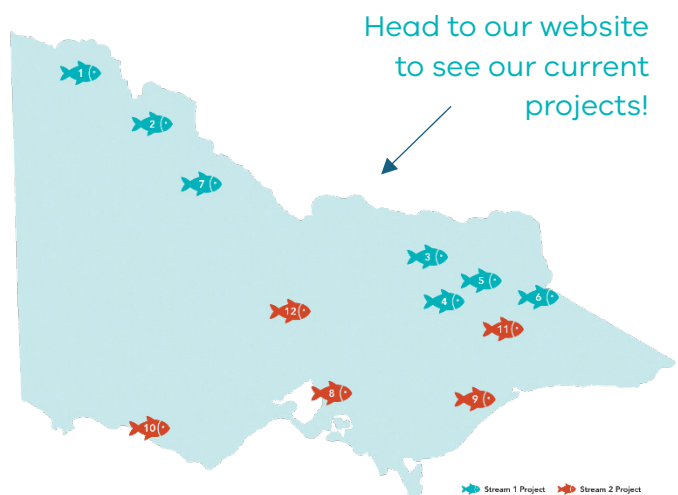
Stream 2: Partnerships to address critical fish habitat priorities: working together to restore, recover and rebuild fish populations (up to \$200,000).

Stream 2 will deliver larger-scale projects involving multiple partners and strong co-investment to restore, recover fish habitat and contribute to rebuilding fish populations. Applicants for stream 2 projects will require advanced project management capacity, leadership and connections with recreational fishers and other relevant stakeholders.

Stream 2 grants opened on 7 February and will close at **6:00pm 2 May 2025**.

We encourage government and non-government organisations with strong links to recreational fisher networks to apply for Fish Habitat Improvement funding.

OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS



General information and guidelines for developing an application can be found online at vfa.vic.gov.au/fishhabitatfund



Record Dusky Flathead Stocking

As we improve angling opportunities for every Victorian fisher, we have been enhancing dusky flathead populations through breeding and stocking the species in key marine waters in eastern Victoria.

As part of our dusky flathead breeding program, we engage with highly experienced volunteer local anglers to collect broodstock flathead throughout January each year, which are then transported to the hatchery. The fish are induced to spawn and the fertilised eggs collected. The spent adults are returned to where they were caught, this year from Mallacoota Inlet.

The pond-reared fry are approximately 3cm in length when they are released into key marine waters, such as the Gippsland Lakes, Bemm River and Mallacoota inlet.

This year a record 55,540 dusky flathead have been stocked into Victorian waters so far, providing a boost to existing populations, with a second stocking due to occur in a few weeks.

A big thank you go to all the volunteer anglers who have assisted catching broodstock dusky flathead or contribute to monitoring of flathead populations through the Victorian Angler Diary Program!



New Estuary Perch Research – Project funded by recreational fishing licences

Since 2012, the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) has been stocking estuary perch in waterways across the state to enhance recreational fishing opportunities. Over 2 million estuary perch have been stocked into over 30 waters and anecdotally, these fisheries have performed well with excellent numbers caught, including trophy fish over 50cm in length!

Now, a new collaborative project led by Deakin University, Austral Research and Consulting, and Fish Ageing Services aims to scientifically assess how well these stocked fish are growing and surviving in ten waterways across southwest and central Victoria – to inform future stocking and management. The results will be compared to similar surveys in 2015 which provided an early glimpse into how the species was performing following the first stockings in 2012.

Researchers will use boat-mounted electrofishing and fyke netting to capture estuary perch, measuring their size, age, and condition. By combining biological data with angler experiences, the findings will help guide future stocking efforts and improve estuary perch fisheries. This project highlights the value of collaboration between scientists, anglers, and fisheries managers in sustaining and enhancing Victoria's recreational fishing opportunities.



Record stocking of Trout Cod and Macquarie Perch

It's been a huge stocking season for our Snobs Creek team! Record numbers of trout cod (140,000!) were stocked across 5 rivers on Christmas Eve, giving these environments a massive boost. This mammoth effort gives a huge surge to our trout cod recovery efforts, including expanding their reach into new waters, the Campaspe and Kiewa River, where they have been absent for decades.

Our Macquarie perch recovery efforts are in full operation as 100,000 were stocked into 9 waterways! Like trout cod, we have opened a new front for macca recovery into the Kiewa River with a record high 30,000 fingerlings where they had been extinct since the 1939 bushfires.

With the expansion of our committed trout cod and Macquarie perch facilities at Snobs Creek and *Cracking the Code* initiative for understanding how to captive breeding Macquarie perch, the future of these awesome threatened endangered native fish continues to shine!



Australian Trout Foundation - Livingstone Creek Project

Trout fishers giving back!

The banks of Livingstone Creek are getting a much-needed restoration, thanks to the efforts of dedicated volunteers from the Australian Trout Foundation (ATF) and the North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA).

Over two weeks in November 2024, volunteers, including a committed few who stayed the entire fortnight, planted 40,000 trees and shrubs along the creek. This project aims to rehabilitate breeding grounds for Macquarie Perch and improve water quality in a waterway long degraded by mining and agriculture. Thanks to the outstanding restoration efforts, trout will benefit from the improved habitat.

The planting covered several kilometres from the creek's confluence with the Mitta Mitta River, passing through Omeo and two station properties. Additionally, Greening Australia complemented these efforts by funding a million-dollar project to revegetate the surrounding hills.

The landscape will continue to transform, with goals to see stabilised banks, clearer waters and thriving fish populations. Over time, the newly planted trees and shrubs will provide critical habitat in reducing erosion and support the return of Macquarie Perch and more abundant aquatic life, including trout. The broader work in the Omeo Valley, including hilltop revegetation, will further reduce siltation and improve long term water quality.

With continued support, the Livingstone Creek restoration could be a game changer for the region's waterways, ensuring a healthier ecosystem for fish and the anglers who love them.

Well done to the ATF for such a fantastic contribution to catchment health!



AUSTRALIAN TROUT FOUNDATION



Flathead Galaxias Rescue

In February staff from the Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery joined forces with the Arthur Rylah Institute, Goulburn Broken CMA, North Central CMA, Parks Victoria and Taungurung Land & Waters Council to rescue a population of critically endangered flathead galaxias, '*ghost fish*', at risk from drying lagoons in Molesworth.

In response to low oxygen and receding water levels, the group swiftly deployed nets and performed surveys late into the night and again from the early morning. This effort led to 114 individuals being recovered, a small population of which were transported to the Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery to join our captive breeding program while. The remaining recovered fish were translocated into surrogacy dams in the Merrijig area.

Taungurung Land & Waters Council and Parks Vic have secured environmental water to prevent the lagoons from drying out in the future. Once the water is delivered, some translocated individuals will be used to restore the population.

Native Fish Hatcheries – Capital Works

The Victorian Government has committed \$96 million as part of its ‘More piers, jetties and opportunities for little anglers’ election policy which includes \$15 million to expand the Arcadia and Snobs Creek fish hatcheries.

The Arcadia native fish hatchery and Snobs Creek hatchery expansion projects will significantly increase the production capacity of the hatcheries to meet the growing demand for recreational fish stocking with particular emphasis on Murray cod, golden perch, Macquarie perch and trout cod.

ARCADIA EXPANSION

The expansion of the Arcadia fish hatchery will increase the number of production ponds from 30 to over 100, construct a new office/admin building, expand fish processing facilities, create a series of water re-use storages to manage excess water and expand the footprint of the existing hatchery building.

Local contractors have completed the hatchery building and fish processing facility expansions which will triple the capacity of both.

Increasing the number of production ponds from 30 to over 100 and constructing water re-use storages are expected to be completed by 31 July 2025.

The contract for the design and construction of the new office/admin building has been awarded and construction is expected to be completed by mid-2025.

The Arcadia Visitors Centre, home to the Arcadia’s public fish out dam and the world’s largest Murray cod are completed, and the dam is fishing well! Find out for yourself at the Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery open day on 06 April 2025.

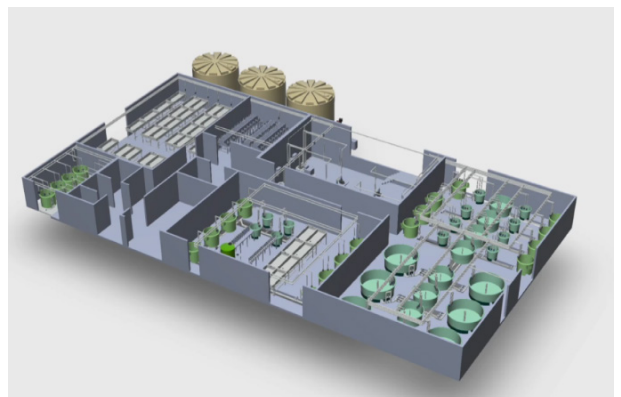


SNOBS CREEK EXPANSION

The expansion of the Snobs Creek fish hatchery will deliver a dedicated Macquarie Perch Recovery Centre along with additional ponds, tanks, and supporting infrastructure to complement the breeding centre. Once completed the breeding centre will be capable of producing up to 500,000 Macquarie perch and 500,000 trout cod for stocking into Victoria waterways annually.

The contract for the design and construction of the new Macquarie Perch Recovery Centre Building has been awarded and construction is expected to be completed by Spring 2025

Supply and installation of the customised Macquarie Perch Recovery Centre Aquaculture System for the building is expected to be completed in late Spring.



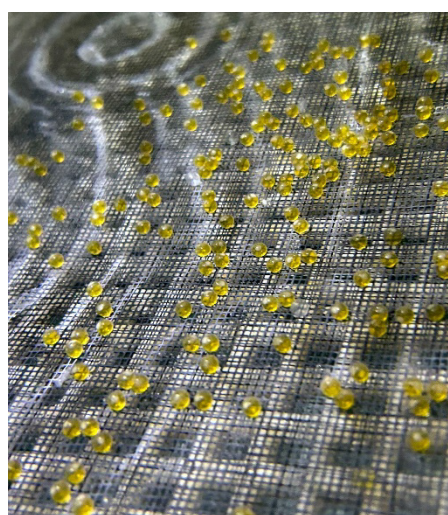
Gippsland Spiny Cray



Glenelg Mussel



Flathead Galaxia



Blackfish Eggs

Conservation Hatchery Update

The Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery, Victoria's first freshwater conservation facility constructed and managed in collaboration with the Arthur Rylah Institute, was opened by the VFA in May 2024. A key priority of this facility is the 10inTEN program which aims to reduce the extinction risk of 10 species in ten years (2033) using conservation stockings and translocations, along with other management interventions.

There is already much to celebrate, including some world-first captive breeding successes. Highlights include:

- Critically endangered Moroka Galaxias and McDowall's Galaxias have successfully bred at the hatchery and released.
- Vulnerable Flathead Galaxias have successfully bred with a spawning trial in its initial phase.
- Critically endangered West Gippsland Galaxias have been collected and breeding is planned for this year.
- Endangered South Gippsland Spiny Crayfish have moulted and are ready for breeding plus it was discovered that they fluoresce under UV light!
- Endangered southern purple-spotted gudgeon juveniles have been released into 'surrogacy' dams.
- River Blackfish – a breeding trial has begun with broodstock collected from the Wimmera catchment in conjunction with Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and the Barengi Gagjin Land Council.
- Critically endangered Glenelg Freshwater Mussels have been collected from the wild and captive breeding is underway in conjunction with Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority under a program funded by the Australia Government's Threatened Species Action Plan.

Snobs Creek Hatchery Update

Feeding of Trout cod and Murray cod broodstock has begun following the completion of the 2024/25 native breeding season. Reconditioning the broodfish after spawning ensures they receive the essential nutrients needed for the following year's spawning season.

The collection of Trout cod for our breeding program has begun. Wild-caught fish will undergo a 10-day quarantine before being assigned to one of our 19 brood ponds at Snobs Creek.

Chinook Salmon breeding is coming up on the horizon and we're gearing up for an all-hands-on deck effort this spawning season, with the goal of producing 100,000 fish.

Silt removal is currently underway as pond maintenance is nearing completion. Once complete, these renovated ponds will house valuable trout cod broodstock for the Snobs Creek breeding program.

The Snobs team has been collaborating with ARI and GBCMA to rescue Macquarie perch and Trout cod from areas with poor water quality in the Hughes, Sevens, and Hollands creeks. These fish will be cared for by the team until conditions improve.

The native fish production & stocking season for 2024/25 was a standout year, with the team achieving a record production of 141k trout cod, 681k Murray cod, and 102k Macquarie perch, resulting in an overall record total of 924k across all species.



RFL Grants Update

The 2024-25 round of the RFL Large Grant program closed on the 28 February 2025. A total of 26 applications were received which will be assessed by the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Advisory Committee. The committee will make recommendations on which projects should be funded and provide the best outcomes for recreational fishing. The Intermediate and Small Grant programs are open year-round. The Small Grants program continues to be well subscribed with over 25 applications approved and funded in the current financial year.

Here are some examples of the great projects that have been funded with recreational fishing licence fees:



SMALL GRANTS

Ballarat Fly Fishers - Learn to Flyfish Workshop and Open Day

Late last year, 20 budding fly fishers were educated on all facets of fly fishing by the club's team of experts. Workshop information included what the Ballarat Fly Fishers Club is all about, selecting the right fly-fishing tackle and how to set it up, the types of bugs that trout eat, which fly to use and when, and the different fly-fishing techniques that can be used.

Following the workshops, all participants were taken out in boats to fly fish on Lake Wendouree by 20 of the Club's most experienced members. This provided an opportunity to put everything they had learnt throughout the morning into practice, and most participants were able catch their first brown or rainbow trout on fly and hopefully are now hooked on fly fishing.

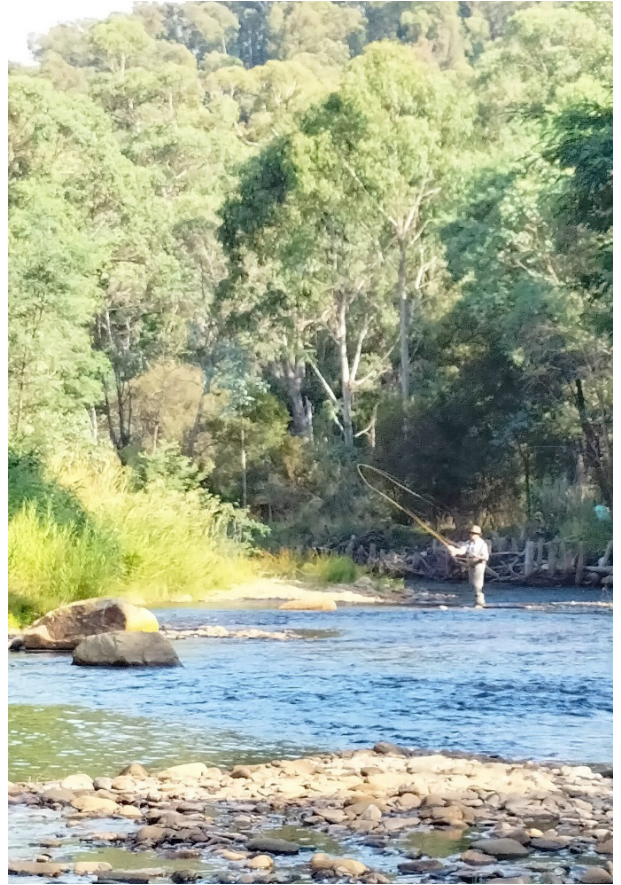
The Club also scheduled a follow up "Open Day" as part of the project. Over 40 fishers attended the day and were able to participate in most of the theory lessons that were offered in the Learn To Flyfish Workshop. The club really put the \$3,420 grant to good use!

INTERMEDIATE GRANTS

Mayfly Rise Project

The Ovens River at Bright has suffered long term degradation through historic gold dredging and sluicing operations, impacts from a series of major Alpine bushfires, and major flood events.

The Australian Trout Foundation, working with the Alpine Fly Fishers, the Wangaratta Fly Fishing Club and the North East Catchment Management Authority chose an eroded stretch of about 2.5 km of the Ovens in need of habitat restoration. The site is close to the town of Bright and very accessible to families and the angling public. Alpine Fly Fishers received funding of \$38,400 through the RFL Intermediate Grant program for Stage 1 of the Mayfly Rise Project. The Australian Trout Foundation then received \$49,900 from the Victorian Fisheries Habitat Fund to continue the works on through Stage 2. The works aimed to restore in-stream and riparian habitat by placement of large boulders, timber, and root-balls within the stream, and re-planting of riparian edges with native grasses, shrubs and trees which helps re-establish insects as food supplies for all aquatic species, as well as protect the river banks. A survey of aquatic life after completion of the project showed native blackfish, Macquarie Perch, Platypus and trout had “taken residence” in the restored habitat.



Mayfly Rise Project

LARGE GRANTS

North Central CMA - Increasing habitat for river blackfish in the Tullaroop Catchment

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) led a project to create breeding habitat for river blackfish out of large tree trunks and root balls and installed them at 5 sites in Birch's and Tullaroop creeks between the Newlyn and Tullaroop reservoirs. The CMA was able to source some very heavy tree trunks up to 10 metres long, which were salvaged from flooding events in 2022, and they carved holes and slots in them. The tree trunks were then secured in areas that would be suitable for blackfish to breed, and where they wouldn't be dislodged during a flood. River blackfish are one of the native fish species that has declined in these waterways since European settlement, on the back of mining, farming and river regulation. The CMA received \$23,000 through the Large Grant program to undertake the project, and it was completed in time for the current breeding season.





Upcoming recreational fishing forums in Winter 2025

After the successful season of fishing forums in 2024, we're back in 2025 with more upcoming regional recreational fishing forums!

Our recreational fishing forums enable recreational fishers to connect with fisheries managers, scientists and partners to present and discuss opportunities across Victoria as well as share the latest recreational fishing updates.

Keep an eye on our VFA website and socials for dates and locations near you!

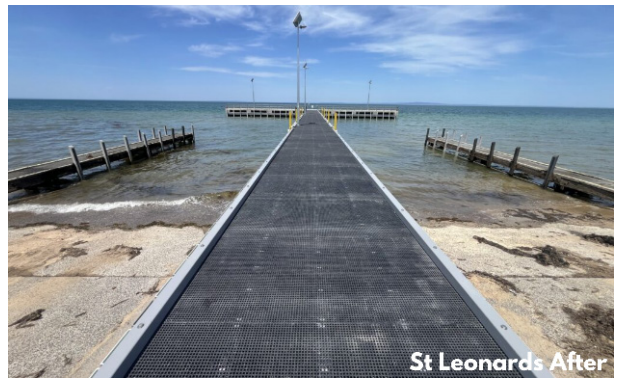
Better Boating Victoria - Project Updates

- Mildura Horseshore Bend Red cliffs boat ramp is currently being upgraded and will be completed by March 2025.
- Tankerton boat ramp is currently being upgraded and will be completed by March 2025
- Lang Lang boat ramp is currently being upgraded and will be completed by June 2025, subject to weather.
- An all-abilities access jetty is currently being installed at Blue Rock Lake.
- On-ground works are progressing to upgrade the Mallacoota Bastion Point boat ramp.
- Victoria Park Lake boat ramp in Echuca has been upgraded.
- Seagull Drive boat ramp in Loch Sport has been upgraded and reopened to recreational boaters.
- St Leonards (stage 1) is 95% complete and the ramp has been reopened. Minor landscaping/disability hoist installation works progressing.
- Ramp upgrades were also completed at Inverloch and Torquay Fishermens Bend.
- Better Boating Victoria (BBV) has been attending angling club meetings in 2024 to chat all things boating. If you would like BBV to attend one of your club meetings, simply email bbv.communications@vfa.vic.gov.au.

St Leonards Before



St Leonards After



Torquay Before



Torquay After

