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## RE: VRFish Support for DRAFT FISHERIES (SPIDER CRAB) NOTICE 2020

The Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish) is the peak body representing the voice of 838,000 recreational fishers in Victoria.

Recreational fishing for Giant spider crabs *Leptomithrax gaimardii* is an emerging and important recreational fishery. Giant spider crab fishing is undertaken by a small, but important, recreational fisher community segment and this localised, short-lived annual fishery is a legal and beneficial outdoor activity for Victorian family groups.

VRFish supports the Victorian Fisheries Authority advice that Giant spider crab recreational fishing as currently practiced does not pose a sustainability threat and VRFish supports the scientific studies and surveys currently underway.

Unfortunately, the management of this fishery has been attacked by a loose association of conservation, NIMBY and self-interested water user groups in a campaign coordinated by the avowed anti-recreational fishing group Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA). VRFish will actively defend any recreational fishing segment from the type of campaign we are witnessing, and we call on the Victorian State Government to likewise defend a legal and beneficial recreational fishing activity.

VRFish supports the Fisheries (Spider crabs) Notice 2020 as drafted and on the following grounds:

### 1. Recreational fishing and Cultural Heritage:

Sustainable recreational fishing for aggregations of fishes, molluscs and crustaceans is nothing new to Victoria.

Historical recreational fisheries such as Blue Sea Mussel, *Mytilus edulis*, foraging at Brighton Beach (*important to the Italian Australian community*), Southern Calamari, *Sepioteuthis australis*, fishing from bay piers (*important to the Greek Australian community*), or Skipjack Tailor, *Pomatomus saltatrix*, winter fishing at Newport Power station (*important to the Vietnamese Australian community*), provide ample evidence of a deeper connection (*i.e. cultural heritage*) to our recreational fisheries than simple 'over harvesting', as is being asserted by the groups opposed to the recreational take of Giant spider crab.

A proper understanding of our modern recreational fishing CALD community shows the emerging crab fishery benefit extends to a culturally rich significance and heritage. Put

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better, for everyone.**

simply, there is a 3,000-year written history of 'crab culture' within Chinese Australian heritage<sup>i</sup>. This recreational fishing based cultural heritage is deserving of recognition and celebration, not mockery.

***“One hand holding crab claws, one hand holding a glass, swimming in the wine pool and life has been satisfied” Zhou Bi (Han Dynasty c180 AD)***

The suggestion by a clearly xenophobic and ignorant minority within the campaign against the Giant spider crab recreational fishery, that it holds no 'cultural significance' for fishery participants, should serve to discredit these groups.

## **2. Safety Risk:**

An increased safety risk to swimmers and divers, through recreational fishing activity on Rye Pier encouraging dangerous shark interactions, has been put forward by the VNPA as an issue worthy of initiating a ban on the spider crab recreational fishery. VRFish rejects this laughable assertion<sup>ii</sup>.

However, the wanton vandalism of legally used recreational fishing equipment by divers and increasing threats of violence to recreational fishing families at Rye and Blairgowrie piers does increase the safety risk - *for recreational fishing families*.

VRFish will advocate for the Minister for Fishing and Boating to increase protection for recreational spider crab fishers through the use of existing powers under the Marine Safety Act 2010.

***Recommendation:*** The Minister for Fishing and Boating direct the maritime safety regulator to cause an urgent safety rule to be made (section 186 MSA 2010), upon notice by Victorian Fisheries Authority staff, that precludes recreational diving within 50m of a pier being used for recreational spider crab fishing and for a relevant period of time (*i.e. 2 weeks*).

Should it be apparent that an urgent waterway rule does not/would not deliver a lessened safety risk for recreational fishing families undertaking pier based fishing, then VRFish will advocate for the Ports Minister to direct the local port manager to make a set aside determination under the Port Management (Local Ports) Regulations 2015: Regulation 11 (1) Set Aside Determination, 11(2)(b)(i)(a) - to preclude recreational diving and swimming under relevant piers for an extended period of time.

## **3. Lion Media Group (LMG) – Giant Spider Crab Recreational Fisher Survey**

Despite misleading assertions by the VNPA, the LMG survey clearly shows that recreational fishers value the spider crab catch, are consuming the crab, are targeting other species of crab (*Carcinus maenas*) and are highly compliant with current fisheries regulations. They are clearly practicing 'crab culture'.

The opponents of the fishery are even reproachful of the gleeful zeal with which participants in the fishery go about catching crabs. There are 600,000 fluent Mandarin speakers in Australia and 838,000 recreational fishers in Victoria available to help enlighten the opposing groups and apply describe the joys of recreational fishing.

#### 4. Environmental Damage

The VNPA and recreational diver groups' suggestion of recreational fishing equipment generating large scale 'mechanical damage' to the benthic ecosystem<sup>iii</sup>, bycatch destruction and water pollution from crab bait is absolutely rejected by VRFish.

One only needs to consider the magnitude of moulting crab mortality in nearby waters and limited impact on surrounding water quality to reject the VNPA's assertions. Indeed, the local stormwater Impacts<sup>iv</sup> and even swimmers in nearby waters<sup>v</sup> over the summertime have a greater impact on local water and sediment quality.

#### 5. Precedence

Should the Victorian State Government initiate a ban on recreational fishing for Giant spider crabs in any form, against the advice of the Victorian Fisheries Authority, VRFish believes it will only encourage groups opposed to recreational fishing to target other legal and beneficial recreational fisheries.

Indeed, the fact that Giant spider crab have returned to Port Phillip Bay In any numbers being due to recreational fishing lobby efforts to successfully remove commercial scallop dredging In 1997<sup>vi</sup> seems to also have been lost on the groups opposed to this fishery.

**Recommendation:** The Victorian State Government rejects the call for a ban on recreational fishing for Giant spider crabs.

#### 6. References

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<sup>i</sup> Cui & Ning (2018). *Research on the Application of Crab Culture in the Development of River Crab Industry of Shanghai*. Journal of Marine and Island Cultures, v7n2.

<sup>ii</sup> "According to the International Shark Attack File, the sevengill shark has been responsible for five documented unprovoked attacks on humans since the 16th century". Florida Museum, accessed 06.10.2020, <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/discover-fish/species-profiles/notorynchus-cepedianus/>

<sup>iii</sup> "research reported that around 90% of divers had one or more physical interactions with reef benthos" Abidin & Mohamed (2014). A Review of SCUBA Diving Impacts and Implication for Coral Reefs Conservation and Tourism Management. v12,4ICTR.

<sup>iv</sup> DELWP (June 2018). Issues Paper for the Improving Stormwater Management Advisory Committee, accessed 06.10.2020, [https://www.water.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/394148/Stormwater-Issues-Paper.pdf](https://www.water.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/394148/Stormwater-Issues-Paper.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> "swimming can cause water pollution problems" Queensland Government. Department of Environment & Science, accessed 06.10.2020, <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/management/water/caring-for-water>

<sup>vi</sup> Currie, D.R., and Parry, G.D. (1999). Impacts and efficiency of scallop dredging on different soft substrates. Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 56: 539–550