

Water Act Review Secretariat
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Dear Sir

Commonwealth Water Act Review 2007

We are writing on behalf of VRFish, the recreational fishing peak body representing the interests of Victoria's 720,000 recreational fishers.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the review of the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*. It is vitally important that Commonwealth policy and legislation provides adequate environmental water to sustain our aquatic ecosystems now and into the future.

We feel there needs to be greater recognition of recreational fishing values and existing investment in our inland waterways. Historically, recognition of environmental values has largely been associated with flora (eg- trees) and fauna (eg- bird life) and there is an urgent need to ensure fisheries values are also given high priority.

A significant proportion of recreational fishing licence fees are used in Victoria to improve fish habitat and restore native fish populations. Similar initiatives are implemented in New South Wales using revenue raised by recreational fishers. In short, recreational fishers in these two States make a major investment towards improving the natural assets of the Basin system.

It is also worth noting that the economic contribution from recreational fishing in the Murray Darling Basin has been valued at \$1,352 million (direct expenditure) in 2010/11¹. For this value to be maintained and enhanced in future it is crucial that appropriate safeguards are in place for the environment.

We would like to see a greater emphasis on environmental flows that take into account spawning cues for key recreational fish species such as Murray cod. We are supportive of environmental flows for these purposes that are timed with the delivery of irrigation water, as this will optimise the overall benefit of utilising our limited water resources. Management of this water also needs to ensure iconic locations are managed in a way that reduces the risk of black water events and loss of fish through water off takes.

Finally, it is imperative that the currently agreed MDBC right of water to be returned to the environment is protected and not reduced.

¹Economic contribution of recreational fishing in the Murray Darling Basin. Department of Primary Industries. 2011. Ernst and Young, Melbourne.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the review of the Commonwealth Water Act. We look forward to further consultation and dialogue on this important issue as the review progresses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dallas D'Silva', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dallas D'Silva
General Manager
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body
3 July 2014