



## SEAFOOD INDUSTRY VICTORIA

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### **POLICY IN RELATION TO RESOURCE ACCESS SHARING AND RECREATIONAL FISHING SECTORS**

Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV) is the peak body for commercial fishing in Victoria, and represents members involved in the harvesting, processing, wholesaling, retailing and exporting of seafood. SIV has developed this policy in response to increasing fishing pressure on inshore fish stocks from the recreational sector.

Recreational fishing in Victoria is considered to be both a popular and enjoyable leisure activity, with about 721,000 recreational fishers across Victoria (Ernst and Young 2009).

Ever-increasing numbers of fishers aided by improved mobility and sophisticated tackle and techniques, have contributed to growing pressure on many of Victoria's key fish stocks, most near major population centres such as Melbourne, Geelong, Portland and Lakes Entrance.

Increasing fishing pressure on inshore fish stocks, environmental and habitat degradation from poor land management practices and pollution from urban and industrial discharge are joining forces that can impact on the stock status.

To manage Victoria's fisheries resource effectively, catch data for both commercial and recreational fishing is required. The main problem with this is that the recreational catch is relatively unknown. Increasing conflicts have arisen between recreational and commercial fishers over the use of the resource and it has been argued that recreational fishers personal decline in catches is a direct result of commercial fishing activities. Anti-commercial fishing campaigns supported by some recreational fishers may seriously jeopardise commercial fishing in Victoria if they are successful. Decisions on resource sharing should not be influenced by hearsay or false anecdotal information but would only be informed by scientific, evidence based rationale.

Victoria's fish stocks is a shared resource, and access should not be restricted to only one user group but be managed fairly to give all stakeholders access. Forming partnerships with stakeholders is central to open and honest communication, which is respectful of, each sectors differences. Open communication will minimise localised competition between user groups, with the aim of finding workable solutions to access problems into the future.

This Policy Paper provides a background to the issue and a clear policy statement outlining SIV's Position. This Policy Paper should be used by members representing the commercial fishing industry on advisory committees, to clearly put forward SIV policies on relevant issues and hence protect and promote commercial fishers and the seafood industry.

#### **Link to SIV Objectives under the Strategic Plan 2013-2017**

*1.1 Achieve improved resource protection*

*1.4 Access to relevant and reliable data and research*

*2.1 Resource protection*

*4.1 Improve and enhance communication*

*4.2 Engage with members and relevant industry bodies and key sectors*

## Policy statement

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The SIV Policy position on Resource Access sharing and Recreational sectors is as follows;

- Provide certainty and security for investment decisions to all sectors;
- Where re-allocation of fisheries resources from one user group to another results in erosion of existing rights, fair and adequate compensation or adjustment assistance will be paid for any unavoidable impacts such as those associated with the loss of access to fishing grounds and/or the value of commercial fishing licences;
- Existing entitlements of commercial fishers should be recognised in any management arrangements;
- Sustainable fisheries management should be implemented across all users of the resource equitably;
- All Ministerial decisions on resource sharing should be based on the best available social, biological and economic data;
- That data from fisheries be reviewed in an appropriate timeframe to ensure they are delivering maximum community and industry benefits; and,
- That all stakeholders are considered by the arrangements.

## Rationale

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### 1. Fair access to fisheries resources

The fisheries resource is a publicly owned resource which allows access to all user groups. Increasingly conflicts have developed between user groups, and the fair allocation of the resource has become an issue. Fisheries management objectives should consider the welfare of the resource, economics and the community when allocating shares of the resource to various fisheries sectors.

#### *1.1 Reservation of areas and species for recreational fishermen*

Any reservation of areas for exclusive use by recreational fishers may provide at best only a short-term increase in recreational catches, and is not a viable long-term management strategy, as any benefits would be rapidly diminished by an increasing level of recreational fishing effort.

Any reservation of species for exclusive use by recreational fishers is also those species that are demanded by seafood consumers and supplied by commercial fishermen. Declaring any of the most commonly targeted species non-commercial would prevent these fish being available to the majority of the public.

### 2. Sustainable use of fisheries

Communities of aquatic fauna and flora together with their physical environment form an aquatic ecosystem. Within these ecosystems there is continual interaction and interdependence between the components such that disturbance to one component may affect the stability of other components or of the total system.

Environmental issues related to recreational fishing are generally those relevant to commercial fishing as well. For the maintenance of fish populations and for fishing to continue, it is essential that the integrity of the marine ecosystems be protected.

The fisheries resource, while it can be considered renewable, is also biologically limited. Therefore the need to manage our resource sustainably is intuitive.

## *2.1. Fishing Competitions*

Fishing competitions differ from other forms of recreational fishing. They result in high fishing effort being concentrated in a particular location over a short period and which can have a significant impact on fish stocks and commercial operations.

### **3. Research**

Research is a fundamental need to provide sound scientific information for the proper management of fisheries. It is vital to know recreational catch levels and the overall impact of amateur fishing. The best way to achieve this is to establish a recreational fisheries information data base (encompassing historical catch and fishing effort records) to complement the existing commercial one.

### **4. Management Measures**

Fisheries management rules affect a wide range of fishing activities. Their underlying principles concern the conservation of fish stocks and equity of access across the resource.

There have been many different management measures used, including: bag limits, legal sizes, closed waters, closed seasons and fishing methods. Results of research on recreational fish species may lead to other management measures becoming necessary.

#### *4.1. Bag limits and minimum size limits*

Imposing bag limits and minimum legal lengths is a key factor in conserving and sustaining the stocks of a whole range of fish. These two constraints are accepted worldwide as positive steps towards ensuring sustainable use of the fisheries resource. These restraints are used to allow fish to spawn and to curb the capture of undersized fish, crustaceans, molluscs and cephalopods.

### **5. Enforcement**

Illegal fishing practices undermine fisheries management strategies and regulations and compromise the sustainability of the fisheries resource. Enforcement effectiveness is generally measured by the amount of community compliance with fisheries management rules.

#### *5.1. Illegal sales of fish*

There is evidence of widespread fish selling amongst recreational fishers, and the practice varies widely in scope. There is a need for highly effective enforcement, and penalties which are perceived as an effective deterrent.

### **6. Charter vessels**

Nowadays a significant proportion of recreational boat fishing occurs on boats hired or chartered for that purpose. Many of these charter boats operate from established tourist centres or major population centres.

Charter boats are a component of the recreational fishery which provides a means for anglers to extend their fishing activities over areas and times beyond the range and endurance of average angler's boats.

The effect of charter vessels on fish stocks is uncertain although the number of registered vessels, range of operations and carrying capacities indicate that the impact, particularly on reef fisheries, may be substantial. It would be appropriate to license charter operators to understand their impact on the resource, and potentially curb their take (on a per boat basis) to ensure sustainable use of the resource.

## 7. Education

All fishermen benefit from an increased awareness of their influence on fish stocks and the environment. The recreational fishing community would benefit from programs directed at ensuring fishing restraint to protect their future fishing.

Recreational fishers are generally uninformed about commercial fishing practices and fisheries management, often leading to unnecessary conflict between the two groups. Numerous myths about commercial fishing have been repeated often enough that some now consider them as fact.

Refer to the following reference materials:

- *Fisheries Act 1995*
- *SIV Strategic Plan 2013-2017*
- *VRFish Angling Competitions Policy*
- *Ernst and Young, 2009, Economic Study of Recreational Fishing in Victoria*

### Policy review

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- SIV will review this policy, and related documents, every 5 years.
- SIV Members are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

**Policy created date  
(Approved by the SIV Board)**

20 August 2013

**Policy review date**

20 August 2018

**Signatures**



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