

# Seafood Industry Victoria 2014 State Election Policy



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# Seafood Industry Victoria

## 2014 STATE ELECTION POLICY STATEMENT

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The Victorian seafood industry boasts some of the finest seafood throughout Australia. The cooler waters of Victoria produce high value species such as southern rocklobster and abalone. There are quality scallops available from Bass Strait, while Bay and Inlet fishers provide fresh, locally caught finfish. Other important fisheries that operate in Victoria are eel, giant crab and wrasse. Victoria has an ever developing aquaculture industry, both land and sea based.



The seafood industry is an important source of jobs, providing employment for approximately 8000 people in harvesting, processing, wholesaling and retailing sector. The commercial wild harvest and aquaculture sectors alone have had an average Gross Value Product (GVP) in excess of \$70 million per annum over the past three years.

In our capacity as the peak body for the Victorian commercial fishing industry, Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV) liaises with State and Federal government, the media, environmental groups and other stakeholders on behalf of, and in our member's best interests.

The major role of SIV is to disseminate the flow of information from these groups to industry and provide appropriate responses from the industry as a whole. On behalf of industry SIV provides input and direction on a range of subjects including fisheries legislation, licensing and access issues, development and licensing of new fisheries, marine parks, fisheries management plans, native title, quota allocation, environmental issues, introduction of quality assurance programs, representation on industry training boards, educational materials for school students and the general public, research and development applications, media inquiries, press releases and marketing and promotion of seafood products.

SIV is asking State political parties to make commitments to the following:

- That they unambiguously support Victorian commercial fishing industries as sustainable and as providers of best quality seafood to consumers;
- That they celebrate Victorian commercial fisheries as well managed and regulated;

- That noting the continual increase in seafood consumption per head and the strong and growing demand for local Victorian seafood, they undertake to secure and support growth in the Victorian Seafood Industry;
- That they recognise the excellent environmental management credentials of Victorian commercial fishing industries;
- That they recognise Victorian fisheries as good corporate citizens who make a vital and significant contribution to many of our rural communities;
- That they take action to prevent the degradation of the marine environment by non fishing activities, such as urban, agricultural runoff to ensure that fish stocks can be sustainably harvested by future generations.

SIV together with the Victorian commercial fishing industry have outlined specific priorities below:

### **Resource Allocation**

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The Victorian commercial fishing industry has been subject to many closures through the implementation of Marine Parks, exclusion zones around artificial reefs in Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland Lakes, exclusion zones around oil and gas infrastructure, closure of Western Port Bay to commercial netting, closure of Mallacoota, Lake Tyers and Tamboon Inlet to commercial fishing and other fisheries management decisions, which have impacted severely on industry's access to resources. Certain sectors of the Victorian commercial fishing industry have also imposed voluntary periods of no fishing on themselves, to allow the recreational sector access to specific resources during some peak periods. Reducing industry's access to the resource results in a less economically viable seafood and fishing industry, while also reducing the amount of fresh local seafood entering the market.

SIV together with the seafood industry seek the following commitments:



- A clear commitment that no further mandatory closures are affected without industry support, including Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland Lakes;
- Transparent and robust strengthening of the Victorian legislation regarding industry consultation, including reinstating SIV as the peak body;
- A clear commitment to robust processes to underpin any potential further marine planning,

including significant opportunities for industry consultation;

- Strengthening of property rights for all fishery licence holders;
- A clear process and funding for the ongoing monitoring of marine parks;
- A clear commitment to no reallocation of the fishing industry resources without compensation to industry for the loss of those resources.

### **Fisheries Cost Recovery Implementation**

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The Victorian Government is currently moving towards implementing a simpler, more transparent, forward-budgeting cost recovery system that assists in meeting policy objectives. The Government assures that the development of better regulation imposes the lowest possible burden on Victorian businesses.

SIV is not opposed to cost recovery, however the current regulations as they are written have significant effects on industry in terms of social and economic pressures. The RIS underestimates these impacts, and will force industry members into financial hardship. This is yet another pressure in an already contracting and struggling industry.

The Fisheries Cost Recovery Standing Committee (FCRSC) continues to note the need to focus attention on refining cost recovery processes to make them more transparent and equitable across fisheries; and improve communication with industry, including a greater engagement in up-front budgeting and performance reporting in the context of cost recovery.

SIV on behalf of industry continues to seek the following commitments:

- Increased cooperation with DEPI on the development of a Fisheries Cost Recovery regime that provide a more transparent view of the costs associated with Fisheries Management;
  - Including a clear commitment from Government for improved operation of the FCRSC, including SIV being a member of this group.
- A clear commitment that the funds collected from the Victorian seafood industry will be solely used to further develop and ensure the ongoing operation of those commercial fisheries;
- To include within the new Cost Recovery provisions to address non-delivery of services by Fisheries Victoria;

- Greater industry involvement and co-management on allocating their fees/levies to fisheries management services provided by Fisheries Victoria for their sector.

### **Promotion of Victoria's Seafood Industry**

The Victorian commercial fishing and seafood industry is facing significant risk from false impressions. Some commercial fishing operations have been incorrectly labelled as "irresponsible" and "no different" to unsustainable fisheries in other parts of the world. This undermines our industry's excellent record on sustainability and environmental management.



SIV and industry seek the following commitments:

- A clear commitment from State Government to invest in the seafood industry development and promotion, over the next 3 years, based upon the priorities and programs agreed by industry and SIV;
- Recognition by the Government of Victoria of SIV and industry's excellent record on sustainability and environmental promotion of the seafood industry;
- Recognition that the Victorian public want to consume fresh locally caught seafood from Victorian fishermen.

### **Regulation of PrimeSafe**

In light of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impact of Food Safety Regulation on Farms and Other Businesses and the recent PrimeSafe Seafood Risk Assessment there is a clear indication that there is need for red tape reduction.



The Parliamentary Inquiry recommended:

"That the state Government remove the regulatory requirements around the handling of live seafood in Victoria, in a way that is consistent with the approach taken in other states in Australia."

The recently completed Seafood Risk Assessment by PrimeSafe rated all sectors and types of live seafood harvesting as **low** risk.

Specifically SIV and the industry seek the following commitment:

- Immediate adjustments to current regulations, removing the live harvesting commercial fishing operations from Primesafe governance and fees.

## Red Tape Reduction

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There are many State burdens on industry ranging from multiple licences from fisheries management to food safety and marine safety. These have direct and indirect impacts on industry's competitiveness, operation, efficiency and costs.

In terms of specific imposts on the Victorian commercial fishing and seafood industry, SIV on behalf industry seeks commitment that:

- The State Government will remove impediments, bureaucracy and red-tape in Victorian fisheries, and reduce the cost of doing business;
- A renewed commitment for implementation of robust regulations that reinstate customer satisfaction as a primary focus indicator in decision making.

## Food Security

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Seafood harvested and produced from Victorian waters is a valuable and renewable food source. As the Victorian population is increasing, so too are consumer demands for a reliable source of food to meet protein requirements. It is highly documented that seafood is an invaluable source of protein, iodine, omega3 and omega6 fatty acids, essential for our health and wellbeing. Securing industry access to these resources will ensure that health promoting Victorian seafood continues to be readily available to consumers.



SIV on behalf of industry seek commitments for;

- Support to ensure that government legislation and regulations take into account all the needs of the Victorian commercial fishing industry as a food producer;
- A renewed commitment to educating consumers about where their seafood comes from;
- A commitment to provide support, recognition and investment in; and to seafood producing communities.

## Conclusion

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The Victorian fishing and seafood industry makes a significant contribution to our State economy, including many of our rural communities, and to our unique lifestyle.

Many Victorian fishing businesses are small, family owned businesses. They have confronted immense challenges in recent years and continue to work hard to bring fresh local

produce to the \$4 billion dollar restaurant and catering industry supporting jobs and livelihoods throughout Victoria.

Seafood Industry Victoria on behalf of the Victorian commercial fishing and seafood industry seeks from State political parties that they will publicly commit to the commercial fishing industry and its future, actively ensuring its survival.