



SEAFOOD INDUSTRY VICTORIA

MEDIA RELEASE – 5 November 2014

Support Port Phillip Bay Commercial Fisheries **Your Sustainable Supply of Local Seafood!**

Victoria's Bay and Inlet commercial fisheries have been operating sustainably for over 170 years, yet the industry finds itself under significant pressure from ill-conceived calls for removal of commercial fisheries from Port Phillip Bay. The ill-conceived message, which is blatantly incorrect, has resulted in the Coalition under Dr Denis Naphthine announcing a forced removal of commercial netting operators in Port Phillip Bay should they return to power on 29 November 2014.

The Victorian seafood industry is **extremely disappointed** with the announcement, and the claims made that the industry had been consulted. As late as last Thursday, 30 October 2014, at a breakfast in Geelong Dr. Naphthine stated that 'as long as our industry was sustainable we would be there forever'.

This issue is a resource sharing issue, which has now been turned into poorly thought out policy for political expediency.

The Victorian commercial fishing industry has an excellent record in regards to sustainability and environmental management. The Australian Conservation Foundation has independently assessed Port Phillip Bay commercial fisheries as 'sustainable'.

Executive Director of Seafood Industry Victoria, Mr Johnathon Davey said "Sadly, we have experienced that there are those who rather than acknowledge this success story, denigrate it for their own agendas".

Port Phillip Bay fishermen are facing an uphill challenge that threatens the supply of a daily source of fresh local seafood (Snapper, Whiting and many other species) to 5.7 million Victorians. Considering there are approximately 750,000 recreational fishers in Victoria, where will the remaining 5 million Victorians source fresh local seafood, if commercial net fishing is removed from Port Phillip Bay? Mr Davey commented that "the resource belongs to the entire Victorian Community, those that cannot or do not fish are entitled to access fresh fish via commercial fishermen."

Mr Davey went on to say "What Dr. Naphthine is doing is creating two classes of Victorians, a minority, who recreationally fish and will be given all access to fresh local fish and the majority, who for whatever reason do not recreationally fish and will be given no access to fresh local fish."

Victoria's commercial fishing and aquaculture industry directly employs approximately 1300 Victorians, not including the processing, wholesale and retail sectors of the Victorian Seafood industry (which directly and indirectly employs in excess of 7000 Victorians). "This election announcement will see significant job losses throughout the seafood industry should the Naphthine Government return" Mr Davey said.

In Europe and other countries throughout the world local communities celebrate the ability to access fresh locally caught seafood, it is a major part of their culture and contributes massively to their tourism appeal. My Davey questioned “why does the Coalition not want that here?”

In Port Phillip Bay alone the recreational fishing sector is estimated to be removing 600-700 tonnes of snapper annually, with very minimal restrictions to cap this and ensure sustainability. The commercial fishing industry in Port Phillip Bay, under strict catch reporting requirements and management measures, continue to harvest approximately 400 tonnes of fresh Victorian seafood each year. Mr Davey commented “These commercial fisheries operate on a solid supply and demand market; they are small-scale fisheries, often only 1 or 2 man operations. The industry would expect to see price increases and a significant reduction in availability of **fresh, local, sustainably caught** King George Whiting, Flathead, Calamari, to name a few”.

Several tackle and retail shops across Victoria are marketing fresh Port Phillip Bay pilchards and other fish products as a source of bait for recreational fishers. “It seems extremely hypocritical that a sector reliant on the commercial net fishing industry for bait, would propose such a ban on that same sector” said Mr Davey.

“Port Phillip Bay is a public resource in which both commercial and recreational fisheries have existed for many decades, and through proper management by Fisheries Victoria the fish stocks are sustainable with both sectors operating. It is a shared resource that should remain so” he said. The document titled ‘*Overview of the Port Phillip Bay Commercial Wild Catch Fishery*’ available publically on the Fisheries Victoria web site verifies these facts: <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fishing-and-hunting/commercial-fishing/proposal-to-establish-a-commercial-dive-fishery-for-scallops-in-port-philip-bay/overview-of-the-port-philip-bay-commercial-wild-catch-fishery>

Mr Davey also said “To remove the commercial fisheries access to snapper, whiting and other key fish species would severely deplete the amount of fresh local seafood entering the market. Victoria’s commercial fishermen continue to work hard to bring fresh local seafood to service local markets and supply the multi-billion dollar restaurant and catering industry to ensure consumers have the choice of the freshest local seafood.”

“\$20 million will go nowhere near providing a fair and equitable exit strategy for net fishermen in Port Phillip Bay. What this policy will do is remove the legal operators and promote the thriving black market in whiting and snapper sold by “shamateurs” that exists today. There will be a massive increase in demand for illegal fish when the legal operators are removed from the market” Mr Davey said.

“The Victorian community can be extremely confident that when they purchase fresh Victorian seafood they are supporting local, small-scale fishing industries that are harvesting seafood in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner” said Mr Davey.

End.

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