



The Hon. Jaala Pulford
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Dear Minister

VRFish and Government partnership – Target 1 million policy assistance

I am writing on behalf of VRFish, the peak body representing recreational fishers in Victoria.

We pride ourselves on being a professional and forward thinking, solution based organisation that works proactively with Government and other stakeholders to improve recreational fishing in Victoria.

We are pleased that the Government has a vision to grow recreational fishing from 721,000 adults to 1 million by 2020 and note that a number of key actions are planned over the next 4 years to progress towards this goal. This policy is the envy of every other recreational fishing peak body around Australia and Victoria is being recognised for its leadership in this area.

Since the March State Council meeting in Ballarat, VRFish has considered how we can best support the Government to effectively deliver its *Target 1 million* policy. VRFish is well placed to play a major role in assisting with two key policy commitments in particular.

These are:

- \$2000 grants for all fishing clubs to promote membership; and
- Expanding the Angler Diary Program.

Angling clubs have a long and proud history in Victoria and are a microcosm of local communities, especially in regional Victoria. VRFish has extensive networks in this area and a detailed understanding of their needs.

VRFish seeks your support to take on the additional work associated with these two important policies on a project fee for service basis. Additional annual funding of \$100,000 for the next 2 years would allow VRFish to recruit a Recreational Fisheries Liaison Officer. The role would undertake many functions, such as develop governance guidelines, help clubs apply for grants, build capacity and monitor the use of grants by the clubs in line with their intended purpose. This initiative would provide valuable support to the RFL Working Group, who would continue to assess grant applications and yourself, as Minister responsible for the disbursement of RFL revenue.

Other important tasks would include helping clubs develop strategies to grow membership and build their resilience. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to set up new clubs in growth areas (eg- Craigieburn) where there is interest, but limited knowledge and capacity at present. If approved, the position would have a strong regional engagement focus and benefit communities by helping angling club officials and administrators build competency in effective running of clubs across Victoria.

The new role would be vital in enhancing communication with culturally and linguistically diverse community (CALD) groups. The position would foster new relationships with other interest groups such as Beyond Blue and the Men's Shed Association.

The additional funds would also allow VRFish play a lead role in supporting Fisheries Victoria to expand the Angler Diary Program to cover new species, new fisheries and new regions. We would play a key role in identifying current gaps, recruiting appropriate diarists, plus capacity building and training.

The VRFish budget has remained unchanged (apart from CPI adjustments) for close to 20 years. During this time the cost of doing business has continued to increase substantially. Additional capacity, on a project fee for service basis will ensure VRFish can not only deliver consultation and advocacy services to recreational fishers in a more effective manner, but also contribute to the successful implementation of the Target 1 million policy by the Government.

The previous Government provided written in principle support for VRFish having appropriate operational funding. This was associated with a major overhaul of the Recreational Fishing Licence regime in Victoria to start on 1 July this year. While we note the Andrews Government has a different policy on the RFL regime, there is still scope for a 'win win' outcome to be reached.

We hope this proposal will be favourably considered by the Government. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this proposal with you at your convenience.

Thank you for your strong support for recreational fishing in Victoria.

Yours sincerely



Dallas D'Silva
General Manager
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

1 May 2015