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Dear Mr Dowling,

### **Trout cod fisheries notice – Lake Kerferd and Lake Sambell**

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

We welcome the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed opening of recreational trout cod fisheries at Lake Kerferd and Lake Sambell near Beechworth in North East Victoria. In recent decades, State and Commonwealth governments along with recreational anglers have been rebuilding trout cod populations through stocking and habitat restoration efforts. Action 12 of the National Trout Cod Recovery Plan (2008) is to trial a stocked recreational trout cod fishery in Victoria.

Recreational licence fees have been used to stock trout cod into the above lakes since 2008 with the intention of creating a put and take fishery for anglers to catch. This represents a great achievement and shows what can occur when Government, recreational fishers, conservation interests and scientists work together. A portion of our licence fees are also paying to support the recovery of trout cod in rivers that are not open to fishing.

The VRFish State Council met on 16 May 2015 to discuss the proposed Fisheries Notice from Fisheries Victoria. The meeting was attended by over 40 member delegates, including the North East Anglers Association. Native Fish Australia were an apology at the meeting, however their proposal was summarised and noted by members attending on the day. We also considered the results of the recent online survey of fishers, developed jointly by VRFish and NFA about their expectations for the fishery.

In summary, our position is to:

- support the introduction of a bag limit of 1 for the specified waters of Lake Kerferd and Lake Sambell on the basis it allows an appropriate share of the resource between anglers;
- support the introduction of a minimum size limit of 40cm, noting the current size classes of fish and future growth rates for trout cod, which differ to Murray cod;
- not support the rationale for an upper size limit of 50cm given trout cod are not expected to form a self-sustaining population. Anglers should also be allowed to catch and keep a large trout cod from a put and take fishery in future if they choose to do so. Likewise, catch and release fishing should continue to be a choice for anglers with best practice handling and release guidelines promoted by VRFish, Native Fish Australia (NFA) and Fisheries Victoria;
- support future growth of the fishery through continued stocking of these two lakes via the VicFishStock process. This includes considering the merit of stocking other species in these two lakes over the coming years;

- support an education program to highlight that these stocked impoundments will not impact wild populations and that river systems will remain closed to recreational fishers;
- support education programs that increase angler ability to distinguish a trout cod from a Murray cod more generally across the State; and
- support the definition of “next to” as contained in the Fisheries Notice.

We look forward to working with Fisheries Victoria to help grow, promote and manage this fishery in the years ahead.

We believe the social and economic benefits to regional Victoria will be significant and commend Fisheries Victoria and the Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford for the commitment to grow recreational fishing in Victoria.

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**

19 May 2015