



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RECREATIONAL FISHING ADVISORY COUNCIL INC
(FIRST CONVENED IN 1975)
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Regional Australia Select Committee

By Email: regional.reps@aph.gov.au

RE: RECFISH SA-WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Thank you for your Written Questions On Notice, and for your request to respond by cob 11 June 2020.

This RecFish SA response should be considered as complementary to our initial submission of 11 November 2019, the supplementary response of 29 February 2020, and the hearing on 26 May 2020, all of which are published on aph.gov.au.

As RecFish SA was the only recreational fishing organisation in Australia to respond to the Select Committee Terms of Reference, the submissions on the South East Lakes, also called "Kakadu of the South", and the general questions now raised in the WQON, are the opinions of RecFish SA. RecFish SA is fortunate to have amongst its membership some of Australia's best recreational fisheries scientists and managers to deliver the development of recreational fisheries in the South East Lakes.

Additionally, some comments from Mr Rob Loats, Chair, VR Fish have been generously provided. VR Fish is the recognised peak recreational fishing body in Victoria, which has achieved significant positive initiatives for recreational fishers.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE:

1. What would increase participation in recreational fishing?

This is a general question, that RecFish SA will answer with general themes.

Recreational fishing is the largest active participation recreation in Australia involving some 5 million people and generating billions of dollars in economic activity. Seventy percent (70%) of the recreational fishing population live in metropolitan areas, but 70% of recreational fishing is done in regions, requiring significant travelling and cost. Participation in recreational fishing at the grass roots level where people live, should be easier for the general population, including parents and their children, through a very fundamental strategy of providing access to quality recreational

fishing experiences in local waterbodies as close to home as possible, in this increasingly time poor world.

Suburban water bodies are hiding in plain sight as community assets. For instance, Wynn Vale Dam, in the City of Tea Tree Gully, Adelaide, has had Gross Pollutant Traps and Aerators installed to improve water quality, and has a suitable walkway over the water. There are numerous water bodies throughout South Australia including the South East, but no overall body funded to carry out the technical negotiations to formalise arrangements including stocking and all the details needed to make these locations work. Community based organisations are best placed to do this as is the case in Europe and North America. There are more than 50 of these waterbodies, throughout South Australia in regional and metropolitan areas. This concept is supported by Mr Rob Loats, Chair, VRFish who said on 2 June 2020:

“Even small water bodies like town reservoirs can provide enhanced fishing participation for kids”.



RecFish SA Junior Training Day Wynn Vale Dam 14 September 2014

Reservoirs The RecFish SA initiative to develop Warren and Bundaleer Reservoirs has been a remarkable success story. Both reservoirs have been turned into significant fisheries attracting thousands of anglers each year of both native fish and recreationally attractive trout. The **RecFish SA led project attracted State and Federal funds** for the development of infrastructure and the stocking of fish. Facebook pages have been set up, with the Warren Reservoir Fishing page having over 2500 members, and numerous postings and photos of substantial fish being caught including Murray Cod to over 15 pounds, four years after initial fish fry stockings in 2016. There are other reservoirs in South Australia, such as Aroona Dam (Leigh Creek, remote), Beetaloo Reservoir (Mid North), Warren Reservoir, (Northern Metropolitan) South Para Reservoir (Northern Metropolitan). These reservoirs have been stocked and appropriate infrastructure provided, though roadside

signage needs further development. These reservoirs, except Aroona Dam, are owned by SA Water who are the sole supplier of water and drainage in South Australia.

In addition, **Drinking Water Reservoirs** such as Myponga Reservoir (Southern Metropolitan), have recently been opened for recreational purposes, including recreational fishing. Hope Valley Reservoir (Central Metropolitan) and Happy Valley Reservoir (Near South Metropolitan) are planned to be opened.

To assist in guiding the development of reservoirs as high quality recreational fisheries, RecFish SA developed and published a **Reservoir Fishing Concept in 2018 covering South Australia**, available at https://recfishsa.org.au/documents/Reservoir-Fishing-Concept-Plan_final.pdf.

Department of Environment and Water are in charge of the National and Conservation Parks in South Australia and there are numerous water bodies in South Australia, such as Totness Dam, near the burgeoning Mt Barker Township which has a published Management Plan that currently allows recreational fishing, but has minimal facilities, and is not stocked with recreationally attractive fish. Valley Lake and Greenrise Lake, with water, would have similar characteristics. There are no current resources to handle the negotiations.

Fishing Fun Days for parents and their children, such as was conducted by RecFish SA at the above mentioned Wynn Vale Dam in September 2014 with the excellent assistance of a local fishing club. The planning for this event was reasonably complex, and had the full support of Councilors, but still took 12 months. Resources are required to organise these events at the local level.

“Facilitating kid’s fishing days attracts family members as well, and this often leads to families enjoying camping together, and is run by a local angling club or association often leading to increased memberships and fishing events.”

Mr Rob Loats, Chair, VRFish

2. What are the economic benefits of attracting recreational fishing to a regional area?

The financial benefits are substantial through local fishers and attracting fishers from other areas, who want to boat, kayak or fish from the shoreline to catch a particular type or size of fish in a beautiful location.

The 2016/17 Socio-Economic Study by Street Ryan, for the Wimmera Development Association, (https://www.wda.org.au/images/170920WSM_Socioeconomic_value_of_Recreational_Environmental_Water.pdf) found benefits for the recreational water use, including recreational fishing, of \$27.5M in 2016/17. Some of these waterbodies like Lake Fyans, Lake Wartook etc are well regarded trout waters, and have the highest annual economic benefits to reflect those experiences. The WDA is doing a further follow up survey for 2018 (<https://www.wda.org.au/special-projects>)

“Promoting the region’s fishing opportunities and social inclusion and the well being of enjoying the natural environment is increasingly being seen as providing health and well being benefits. Fishing is clearly fit for purpose with this.”

Mr Rob Loats, Chair, VRFish

There would be considerable value in doing a **baseline socio-economic study** for the South East Lakes, and then subsequently to monitor over a ten year period, to focus attention on the necessary changes for this generational change.

There are numerous trails of many different types in SA and interstate. i.e. there are Mountain Bike Trails (MBT), Horse Trails, Cycling Trails etc. A **new MBT and Walking Trail** could be created around

the 50 kms circumference of Lake Bonney SE, through the Canunda National Park, then past the extensive wind farms.

3. RecFish SA's submission (page 5) refers to a Recreational Fishing Trail (RFT);

(a) What are the benefits of the Trail?

A RFT provides a focus for this activity for South Australians and Visitors, as a **separate map** or overlay with other South Australian Tourism maps.

The RFT would be new to South Australia as it would focus on the larger water bodies that have been recently opened and stocked by RecFish SA and the State Government, and many of these stocked, fishable water bodies are **tourism attractions in their own right**, but are not well known to tourists. With a map or overlay, locals and visitors would know exactly where to go. An extra day spent at or near a reservoir, means **money for the local regional community**, and needs **good supplementary infrastructure**, as is being provided at the existing rural, regional and metro locations.

South Australia already has several well-known trails such as the Heysen Trail (1200 km long distance walking trail), and the Mawson Trail (a 900 km Mountain Bike Riding trail), which incidentally crossover at Bundaleer Reservoir, thus providing ongoing reinforcement and awareness.

Queensland has the "Bass and Barra Trail" (<https://www.bundabergregion.org/fishing/111-the-bass-to-barra-trail>) which links some 32 stocked impoundments/reservoirs across regional Queensland and provides good publicity about the stocking of these waterbodies.

(b) How can the Trail be enhanced?

The Trail can be enhanced by:

Adding additional reservoirs and water bodies that are **stocked with recreationally attractive fish**, as allowed by the Fishing Regulations.

Allowing boat and kayak access to all reservoirs and lakes, unless the reservoir and lake have technical constraints or conservation constraints. Only kayak access is currently allowed on Lake Bonney SE. Federal legislation, Product Emissions Standards Act 2017 has been passed to restrict the importation of Inefficient, polluting two stroke motors of all types, including boat engines (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017A00104>).

Having basic facilities such as toilets, rubbish bins, picnic tables, security devices, site signage, channel markers plus adequate road signage, integrated with normal tourist signage and tourist webpages.

Cooperation of State and Local Government for the minor facilities, and Commonwealth funding input for the significant works, such as Engineering Works, as would be needed at the Lake George Outlet, the Lake Bonney SE Fish Passage, and possible substantial works associated with **Environmental Water** to refill empty lakes and top up others.

The South East Lakes will substantially increase the total number of waterbodies for the Recreational Fishing Trail, in recreational fishing opportunities, and total around 900 kms from Aroona Dam to the Victorian border. An attachment to our 11 November 2019 submission indicates the location of the Recreational Fishing Trail.

(c) What are the barriers to getting most out of this Trail?

The most obvious barriers for Local Governments and the State Government are **financial resources**, as the capital works for the South East Lakes and Environmental Water may be an issue.

A significant barrier may be obtaining commitment from the SA Government to **designate the South East Lakes as an attractive tourist location**. The independent RecFish SA Board has no doubt that the South East Lakes would be a wonderful tourist and recreational fishing destination.

When the South East Lakes session with the **Select Committee** occurred on 26 May 2020 media coverage was exceptional, highlighting the recreational use of the Lakes, including recreational fishing, e.g.

- Border Watch, Mt Gambier Page 1 & 2, print media.
- ABC South East radio, 8.45am,
- Channel 7 News
- Channel 10 News
- Advertiser 27/5/20 (from the public broadcast hearing)
- And other media.

4. RecFish SA recommends the establishment of a South East Lakes body to maximise the economic contribution of the SE Lakes (P6), who do you see as funding this body?

RecFish SA recommends that the Concept presented by RecFish SA, be **funded by the Commonwealth and partner governments** to ensure rapid progress in the initial 12-month period.

Commonwealth Funding be provided for RecFish SA resources to assist in delivering the initiative.

(a) Who would be represented on this body?

This is rather a long list, indicating the complexity of making the South East Lakes Concept work, but could be reduced once priorities were worked out. Over 20 Individual organisations have been contacted for their involvement on this South East Lakes Proposal over the last decade thus contributing to the substantial information and background held by RecFish SA. Details can be provided if the Select Committee so requires. Strong associations have been made with:

- **Local Government Councils and local Council endorsed committees**
- **State Government Departments and Agencies**
- **Limestone Coast Regional Development Australia**
- **Independent Recreational Fishing Organisations and;**
- **Prominent and experienced individuals.**

(b) What would be some tangible results that the body could accomplish?

Identifying the major and minor infrastructure needs of the recreational waters of the South East Lakes, including recreational fishing for freshwater, estuarine and marine waters, including, but not limited to

- Lake George
- Lake Bonney SE

And **Environmental Water requirements** for

- Greenrise Lake
- Leg O Mutton Lake
- Brownes Lake

- Cockatoo Lake
- Tilleys Swamp
- Morella Basin

Prepare a baseline **Socio-Economic Study of the Recreational Use**, including Recreational Fishing, of the South East Lakes, commencing July 2020, and finalized by 30 June 2021, with a report available by Mid July 2021.

Document the existing water supply/water transfer agreements for each Lake and waterbody with the South East Water Conservation and Drainage Board and associated targets.

Developing a 5 Year Recreational Development Plan, including Recreational Fishing for the South East Lakes, including appropriate infrastructure and stocking. Demand for better and more recreational fishing venues and experiences will increase. Stocking of faster growth fish, such as Rainbow Trout, may be in higher demand, in suitable waters, for earlier returns.

Preparing tenders for key Infrastructure requirements, ready to go and costed, within 12 months of the start of the Steering Committee.

5. Could you tell us more about the ‘Kakadu of the South’ concept?

The “Kakadu of the South” concept was derived from the **South East Water Conservation and Drainage Board’s Draft South East Drainage & Wetlands Strategy**, released for public comment around August 2019.

Originally, the South East was 50% wetlands, but is now down to 6%, and some of those remaining remnant wetlands are not doing so well. The irony of the wettest part of South Australia now having remnant wetlands and not using the remaining lakes as economic contributors is acknowledged.

There are some 2500 kms of drains on public and private lands in the South East, with a considerable number of Lakes, including the largest freshwater lake outside the Murray system, Lake Bonney SE.

When explaining the concept of the use of the South East Lakes to people at all levels, the use of **the term “Kakadu of the South” took only a second or two for people to grasp** the aim of the proposal, because of its association with the Northern Territory’s Kakadu, which has very good international recognition.

The term **“Kakadu of the South”** conveys wetlands, flowers, and all the uses of camping, hopefully beside some of the lakes in the future, and **has the strength to positively associate it with the Limestone Coast** concept, but that is a matter for regional and state organisations.

To a fisherman, it means cruising along in a boat or kayak, or on the shoreline, fishing in reasonably shallow lakes, as it done in New Zealand waters. There should also be easy access to the marine waters along the coast

6. Are you able to comment on the impact that COVID-19 has had on your priorities?

These are some preliminary thoughts on the impact of COVID-19.

As Australia emerges from the COVID-19 event, it is apparent that in the next few years considerably more intrastate and interstate travel will be undertaken by Australians rather than substantial overseas travel, as undertaken previously.

The Australian overseas traveler will have been planning to be away for considerable periods of time, not just one or two days, and it is possible that travel within Australia will increase and result in greater travel time spent in their own vehicle, with the family, and using caravans and better

quality accommodation, with their families. **Local travel may also increase as the economy recovers** from the high unemployment levels and mortgage uncertainty reduces to more normal levels.

The number of TV and associated media programs on the simpler forms of recreation, such as recreational fishing, kayaking, boating etc may even increase from current strong levels, which were generated from the first National Recreational & Indigenous Fishing Survey (NRIFS) in 2000/01. Currently, there is a second NRIFS being conducted, and some results may be available in 2021.

Please contact [REDACTED] for any enquiries on this response.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Mick Wilson

Chair

