



NATIVE FISH AUSTRALIA (Vic) Inc.
PO Box 162 Doncaster 3108

Hon. Lisa Neville
Minister for Water
Level 17
8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne, 3002

Dear Minister,

Macquarie perch & the Yarra River

Native Fish Australia (Vic) was formed in the early 1980s as a wholly volunteer representative organisation and since inception have advocated for endangered native fish, particularly Trout cod (*Mucullochella macquariensis*) and Macquarie perch (*Macquaria australasica*). We have done this by organising numerous public live fish displays, regular talks to community and angling groups and participation at countless meetings and workshops on the future of Macquarie perch & Trout cod. We continue to operate a community endangered native fish hatchery where we have breed Trout cod and Macquarie perch on numerous occasions and continue to work with Macquarie perch in an effort to determine artificial propagation techniques.

Macquarie perch were first translocated into the Yarra River in the 1850s and the population is the result of numerous translocations from populations across the state. Recent studies have found that this population is the most important of all existing populations in Victoria due to its genetic robustness.

Current Victorian recreational fishing regulations for the Yarra River state a minimum legal size of 35 cm and a bag/possession limit of 2 fish. There is also a closed season for the species from 1 October – 31 December inclusive across Victoria. In the many years I have spent working and angling on the Yarra River, I am **yet to see a Fisheries officer**, or any signage informing the public of current recreational angling regulations and/or around the significance of the Macquarie perch in the Yarra River

It has recently come to our attention of a change in population structure from a seemingly stable and robust population into one that is in decline with a **lack of larger fish**. This has been demonstrated by recent surveys conducted by scientists at Arthur Rylah Institute, and by anecdotal evidence collected by NFA (Vic) members

from many years fyke netting and angling across the river. In the last two years, despite intense effort by NFA (Vic) members, we have **not captured any Macquarie perch over 35 cm.**

What is currently being done by the Victorian Fisheries Authority and other government agencies to manage and protect this vital population of endangered native fish?

In discussions with numerous other stakeholders there appears to be a large illegal take of Macquarie perch. I have personally heard numerous accounts of anglers taking all and everything they catch regardless of bag & size limits or the seasonal closure. From this, there appears to be a clear need for greater enforcement/education by the VFA, and a review of regulations to better protect this vital population of endangered native fish. NFA (Vic) recommends a **dedicated Fisheries officer be allocated for the Yarra River** to enforce regulations & educate recreational anglers across the length of the River. We also call for an **extensive creel survey be conducted along the Yarra River** during the Macquarie perch closed season to determine the true extent of recreational angling. Further we believe a **seasonal closure of sections of the Yarra River** needs further investigations.

We are interested in your views on this issue and are keen to meet with you in the near future to discuss this and other issues around the management of native fish in Victoria.

Yours faithfully,

Tim Curmi
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