



The Fishing Party (Victorian Branch)

ABN 13 881 048 607

P.O. Box 125

Patterson Lakes

VIC 3197

Wednesday, 21st December 2005

Dear valued member,

I would like to take the opportunity on behalf of the Committee of TFP(Vic) to say Merry Christmas to all, and a huge thank you to those who have supported us in a very challenging year.

We have achieved much in our short time, and I am pleased to accept part of the responsibility for the current postponement (hopefully permanent) of the Port Phillip Channel Deepening Project. Many don't realize or appreciate that it was TFP(Vic) representatives who took the first giant step in bringing together the recreational anglers with all other bay user groups to form the current structure of Blue Wedges. This relationship has had many benefits and has broken down many barriers.

We went from the proverbial 'hornet's nest' to the "lion's den" in 24 hours when we approached the professional fishermen, environmentalists, divers, swimmers, business groups and yes, even the Greens, with our original proposal for the West Gate Bridge action, an action that saw the beginning of the media attention to the proposal.

We have fought hard to protect our precious waters, and the fight is currently at about round 7 of a 15 round fight! Scores are roughly equal; however, we now have proven and undeniable evidence that the Trial Dredge did not work within the boundaries as specified by their own Environmental Management Plan. The Port of Melbourne Corporation has still failed to provide a definitive Economic Benefits Statement and we have plenty of evidence as to the negative economic results should the project proceed.

There is still a long fight ahead of us!

Remember that we took on the "Done Deal" with this fight, and that if we had not proceeded with our actions, the Dredge "The Bitch Of The Netherlands" would still be operating in our bay as we speak, and would be there for at least another 2 years – working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

I am pleased to say that we have finally seen the end of an era at VRFish. The helm is now being steered by the new Executive Officer David Kramer, with the new Chairman Robert (Bob) Pearce. I would like to publicly wish these two hard working fellows well in the future and I can assure you all that in my opinion more good has come out of VRFish in the 3 months than it did in 10 years under the old regime.

Even Futurefish has joined VRFish and a Futurefish Board Member by the name of Geoff Craig has also taken a position on the VRFish Board. These are all signs of a positive change that must be welcomed by the Victorian fishing community.

We are currently seeing the results of the fine work done by anglers in the past. Many won't remember the Snapper and Bay's Fighting Fund that was originally convened by the late John Wright (Southern Sportsfishing) and Terry Minnear (Oakdale Angling Club). This was the group of combined anglers that took on the scallop dredgers of Port Phillip Bay and won! The benefits of the best snapper seasons for many, many years are now being experienced by all generations of anglers and I am proud to say that many other TFP members and I myself were active in this group.



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Many people do not know that it was TFP(Vic) members that exposed the huge amount of pollution, contaminants and heavy metals leaching into the Maribyrnong River from the old Pivot site. This site has been owned and “managed” by the Port of Melbourne Corporation for over four years and the EPA has been totally ineffective in monitoring or acting on the problem. It is only through our efforts that the 200 anglers per day that fish this area were alerted to the contamination.

We have convened many meetings, attended many Angling Clubs, staged public information ventures at a great variety of venues, and been very active in attracting suitable media attention. We have provided information and documentation on a broad range of issues, such as drafting the standard letter of objection to the PFD regulations which was used universally by all angling groups.

The one thing that we have failed in at this point is to attract 500 paid up members so that we can contest the next State Election. This is a major priority for TFP(Vic) in the New Year. We have, however, been very effective as a pressure group on many issues and gain greater recognition every day.

Christmas is also a time for reflection. I have to say that both the recreational fishing community and I lost some good friends during the course of 2005. It is a time to really act on the proverb “Life’s Too Short” and get out there and enjoy your life and our chosen sport of fishing.

Take a kid with you when you go, and help our next generations appreciate the wonderful world that we anglers live in. We have so many things that we take for granted in our lives which the majority of people in this world will never see and do. We are truly the lucky country, but let’s ensure that through organizations such as TFP(Vic) we keep it that way.

The New Year 2006 will see many challenges. Other than those previously mentioned, our NSW cousins are just entering another round of Marine Parks legislation. Many areas that we Victorians like to holiday in are under attack, including Narooma, Montague Island, Port Stephens, Byron Bay and many more. We must unite to ensure that our civil rights are not trampled on by the bureaucracy that we see in power at this time.

Please don’t just sit there and think “she’ll be right, mate” – because it won’t be if we don’t professionalise our image and fight for our sport. There are powerful, worldwide groups like PETA who want to stop our sport. Let’s not become another statistic.

Please give some thought to helping us in 2006 – we really need it! But in between times have a safe and happy Christmas and a fish filled New Year.

Best wishes from all at TFP(Vic)

John Willis
Chairman TFP(Vic)

PS. The membership drive prize will be drawn at the February General Meeting (notification will be given in advance)