

Is bringing back scallop dredging in Port Phillip next?

VRFish, the Victorian recreational fishing peak body, has turned its back on those in the diving and snorkelling community it usually claims to represent. If you're vocal against the harvesting of Giant Spider Crabs at piers and jetties by recreational fishers, you're now considered by VRFish to be a bunch of NIMBY, self-interested, xenophobic and ignorant water users.

VRFish Supports Dredging in Port Phillip

VRFish supports the dredging for Giant Spider Crabs from the piers and jetties of Port Phillip. Is bringing back scallop dredging in Port Phillip next on their agenda?

VRFish Supports Four Year Old Crab Culture

VRFish claims the diving and snorkelling communities, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, and others want to suppress the cultural heritage practices of particular community groups. VRFish claim, "There is a 3,000-year written history of 'crab culture' within the Chinese Australian cultural heritage." Interesting how the harvesting of Giant Spider Crabs at piers and jetties has only been of "culturally rich significance and heritage" since the BBC Blue Planet II documentary series showed them late in 2017. Since when have four years been of heritage value?

VRFish Ignores Traditional Owners

VRFish supports the wishes of the Chinese Australian community's desire to celebrate their 'crab culture' heritage without considering the cultural heritage of Australia's first people. Respecting the natural environment, history and culture of the local Aboriginal people and their ancestors — the Traditional Owners of this area — should outweigh all others.

VRFish Ignores Environmental Damage

VRFish says there are no safety risks created by fishers dredging for Giant Spider Crabs. VRFish claims no environmental damage is done by the harvesting equipment to the piers and jetties. VRFish says the ecosystem pollution caused by the marine debris of baits, nets and other fishing gear discarded while dredging for Giant Spider Crabs is of no consequence. Of course, VRFish has no evidence of this because they're not the ones monitoring the activities of the recreational fishers at the piers and jetties on the Mornington Peninsula and cleaning up after them.

When Matthew Flinders sailed into Port Phillip he was astounded by the expansive oyster clusters teeming in the water, the clarity of the waters, and how rich it was with marine life. It's estimated up to half of Port Phillip was once dominated by shellfish reefs, but they're now functionally extinct. Aboriginal people had been harvesting shellfish from Port Phillip for at least 40,000 years, but it took only a hundred years of European intervention before the reefs were decimated.

VRFish Backs Xenophobic Survey

VRFish backs a survey targeted at Chinese Australian fishers. They claim, "The survey clearly shows that recreational fishers value the spider crab catch, are consuming the crab, are targeting other species of crab (*Carcinus maenas*) and are highly compliant with current fisheries regulations." We're now waiting for VicRoads to run a survey of motorists and report that Victorian motorists are highly compliant with road rules.

VRFish Violates Its Own Code of Conduct

VRFish supports the continuation of environmental damage in Port Phillip in direct violation of its Code of Conduct to, "**PROTECT** and restore the environment and fish habitat."

VRFish also seeks to, "preclude recreational diving within 50m of a pier being used for recreational spider crab fishing and for a relevant period of time." They don't want divers to witness the environmental damage. This violates their Code of Conduct to, "**RESPECT** the rights of other anglers and users."

VRFish is ignoring its own Code of Conduct to, "Respect Aboriginal sites, **CULTURE** and values."

But hey, VRFish Codes of Conduct are only "guidelines".

Responsible Recreational Fishing Rules

To properly protect the Giant Spider Crabs and the local environment whilst celebrating the unique aggregation event we call on the recreational fishing rules to be changed to:

- Catch and possession limit:
A person must not take from or possess in, on or next to any Victorian waters more than 15 spider crab on any one day.
- A person must not take from or possess in, on or next to any Port Phillip waters within 500 metres of a pier or jetty any spider crab during May and June each year.

VRFish seeks to place dredging for Giant Spider Crabs to make soup as of "culturally rich significance" to the Chinese Australian community above all other communities. Yet with the proposed rule changes, this community would still be able to do it by wading into the shallow shore waters or from fishing boats.

VRFish Wasting Taxpayer Money

VRFish should stick to representing everyone engaged in recreational fishing rather than spending taxpayer money on cynically weaponising cultural identity and spreading fake news in bullshit, scare-mongering, slanderous advertising campaigns.

