

## SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION of VICTORIA

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### **The New Recreational Abalone Regulations.....**

#### **More 19<sup>th</sup> Century Fisheries Management.**

Recreational abalone fishers are all appalled by these new regulations. The recreational sector has consistently supported efforts to rid the community of fish thieves. But these regulations are simply unfair. They penalise the legitimate recreational abalone fisher – by far the vast majority – and do little to address the problem, which by Fisheries Victoria’s own data, is said to be small.

The Minister’s claim of “extensive consultation” is fanciful. There was no meaningful consultation with the primary stakeholders – recreational fishers – save being told during the RIS period that nothing could stop these regulations. The RIS basis was gobbledegook. And recreational fishers said so. We identified the very poor performance level within Fisheries Victoria, and now it looks like we have paid the price.

The Minister’s comments that “we are listening and working with all Victorians” is just hollow spin. Our concerns have been completely ignored. The Minister is simply consigning the community to unnecessary and ineffectual regulations, and further condoning Fisheries Victoria’s inefficiencies.

These regulations have very little to do with protecting Victoria’s future abalone stocks. They have more to do with pandering to other agendas and perpetuating the enduring myth of wide-scale abalone fish theft. There has been a rumour floating around for some time now, that Fisheries Victoria had sided with the very lucrative commercial sector to remove recreational fishers from the fishery. The commercial sector is not restricted in any way by these new measures. So the SDFV has little option but to conclude that there is substance to the rumour.

The VRFish and the SDFV have long been supporters of open and co-operative fisheries co-management. But there has been no co-management about this. There were other, smarter, ways to address the problem, properly. But Fisheries Victoria seems incapable of engaging with the recreational sector in any productive and intelligent way. They appear more comfortable in practising their ancient philosophy of “let’s kick-the-fishers-out-of-the-fishery-and-then-we-won’t-have-a-management-issue.”

It is a very poor outcome for a State that claims to have a progressive and inclusive fisheries management regime. The community deserves better.