



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Water Resources

The Hon Joe Helper MP
Minister for Agriculture
GPO Box 4440
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Minister

I am writing to you as Delegate of the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources in relation to the re-assessment of the Victorian Developmental Jellyfish Fishery (VDJF) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The VDJF was first assessed by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources (DEW, formerly the Department of the Environment and Heritage) in March 2003 under Part 13A of the EPBC Act in accordance with the Australian Government *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries* (the Guidelines). This assessment was based on the submission provided by the Fisheries Victoria Division of the Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries Victoria) in June 2003. In light of a number of concerns that needed to be addressed to manage environmental risks in the long term, the VDJF was declared an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under Part 13A of the EPBC Act. This declaration allowed the export of product from the fishery for a period of three years.

In October 2006 Fisheries Victoria submitted the document entitled *Statement of Management Arrangements for the Victorian Developmental Jellyfish Fishery* for assessment under the EPBC Act to allow continued export approval for this fishery. The submission has been assessed for the purposes of the wildlife trade provisions of Part 13A of the EPBC Act.

I am pleased to advise that assessment of the fishery is now complete. The new assessment report will be available on the DEW website at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/index.html>.

I am satisfied that the operation of the fishery is consistent with the objects of the wildlife trade provisions in Part 13A of the EPBC Act. I am also satisfied that it is unlikely to be detrimental to the survival or conservation status of any taxon to which the fishery operation relates, or threaten any relevant ecosystem. The fishery is relatively well-managed and operates under an adaptable and precautionary regime capable of controlling, monitoring and enforcing the level of take from the fishery. Performance against the Guidelines is adequate however there are a number of issues that need to be addressed to contain environmental risks in the longer term. Hence, I propose to declare the fishery an approved WTO under Part 13A of the EPBC Act.

This declaration would allow the export of product from the fishery for the next three years. I will make the declaration subject to the conditions at **Attachment A**.

While there are some environmental risks associated with this fishery, I believe that Fisheries Victoria is committed to addressing these issues and is already taking proactive steps in some areas. Officers from our two departments have discussed key areas requiring ongoing attention. In addition to the conditions to the WTO declaration, I understand that they have agreed to a number of recommended actions, focusing on addressing key issues outstanding from the last assessment, to be implemented before the next Australian Government review of the fishery. The recommendations at **Attachment B** have been an important factor in my decision to declare the fishery a WTO and I look forward to receiving your confirmation that they will be implemented.

I would like to thank you for the constructive way in which your officials have approached this assessment.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Andrew McNee
Delegate of the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

10 April 2007

Conditions on the Wildlife Trade Operation Declaration for the Victorian Developmental Jellyfish Fishery

1. Operation of the fishery will be carried out in accordance with the management regime for the fishery in force under the Victorian *Fisheries Act 1995*.
2. Fisheries Victoria to inform the Department of the Environment and Water Resources of any material change to the Victorian Developmental Jellyfish Fishery management arrangements that could affect the criteria on which the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* decisions are based, within three months of any change being made.
3. Reports to be produced and presented to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources annually, and to include:
 - a. a description of the status of the fishery, catch and effort information and the total allowable catch setting process and outcomes of that process;
 - b. the performance of the fishery against stated goals, objectives, strategies and reference points;
 - c. research undertaken or completed relevant to the fishery; and
 - d. an outline of progress in implementing the recommendations made in the *Assessment of the Victorian Developmental Jellyfish Fishery 2007*.

Recommendations to the Fisheries Victoria Division of the Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries Victoria) on the ecologically sustainable management of the Victorian Developmental Jellyfish Fishery (VDJF)

The VDJF is a relatively well-managed fishery with a range of management measures to promote the ecologically sustainable harvesting of species from the fishery. These measures include: a restriction to fish Port Phillip Bay only; a total allowable catch (TAC) of 1,000 tonnes; a minimum bell diameter of 23cm; gear restrictions; and the recording of all catch, including bycatch.

The following recommendations have been made to further strengthen the effectiveness of the management arrangements for the fishery and minimise environmental risks in the medium to longer term. Unless a specific time frame is provided in the recommendation each recommendation must be addressed before the life of the declaration (3 years).

Recommendations

- 1. Within two years, Fisheries Victoria to conduct an Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA), appropriate to the scale of the fishery, and develop appropriate responses to any high risks identified. Fisheries Victoria to also review the ERA in the event that catch or effort levels increase significantly from current levels and to address any new high risks identified.*
- 2. Estimates of abundance and biomass for *Catostylus mosaicus* in Port Phillip Bay to be completed annually and be used to inform management arrangements, particularly with regards to setting the annual TAC. Estimates should take into account variability of jellyfish stocks and where appropriate, the overall bycatch of *C. mosaicus* in other Port Phillip Bay fisheries.*
- 3. Within one year following an ERA, Fisheries Victoria to develop meaningful performance indicators and trigger points, based on the best available information for the VDJF. Within 3 months of becoming aware of a performance indicator being triggered, Fisheries Victoria to develop a clear timetable for the implementation of appropriate management responses.*
- 4. Fisheries Victoria to develop a research strategy for *C. mosaicus* within two years and implement once resources allow or when catch or effort levels increases significantly from current levels. Research should focus on the causes of annual variation and ecosystem role of *C. mosaicus*.*
- 5. Fisheries Victoria to develop and implement a robust system, appropriate to the scale of the fishery, to validate commercial logbook reporting of catch and effort in the VDJF.*