

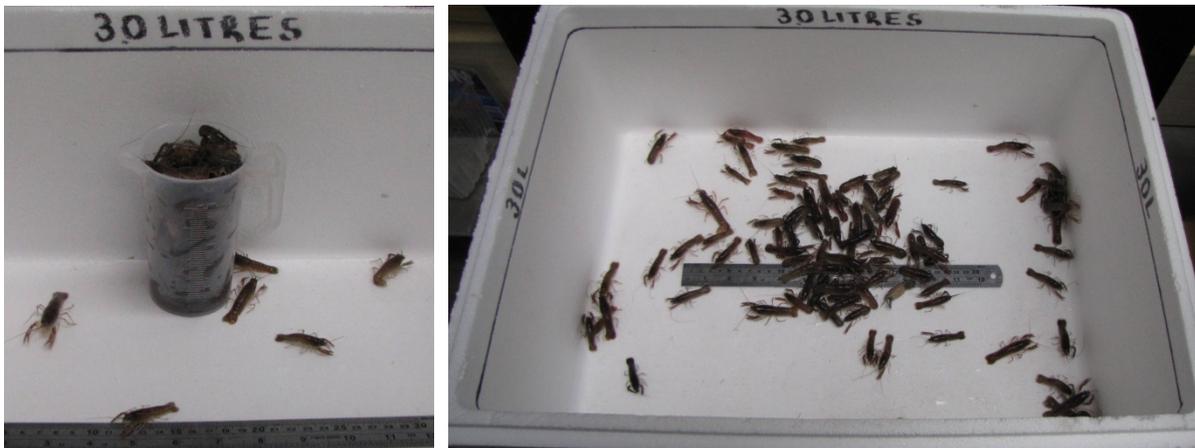
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600
Australia.
Email to: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Please except the following as my submission to the Senate Inquiry.

PROTECTING A FOOD SOURCE FOR OUR NATIVE FAUNA ENVIRONMENTAL VANDALISM

Issue 1 - EXCESSIVELY HIGH RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT FOR BAIT SIZED YABBIES POTENTIALLY REDUCING A FOOD SOURCE FOR WILDLIFE.



Prior to Thursday 22nd November 2012 Victorian Fisheries Regulation for the daily take of freshwater yabbies was increased to 30 litres with no size restriction. This resulted in bag limits which can be 1000's of bait sized yabbies (size dependant) per person per day. **Also there was NO requirement to return berried female yabbies (carrying eggs).** The left photo above shows 100 smaller bait yabbies (suitable for bream fishing) occupying a 250ml vessel. These were then emptied into the 30 litre container above right photo. Recreational fishers could legally have over 10,000 of this size in their possession per person per day. As a comparison the possession limit for bass yabbies (marine) is 100 per person per day with no size restriction. In SA and NSW the daily bag limit for yabbies is 200 per person per day with no size restriction and female yabbies carrying eggs must be returned. **Note:** A man was recently jailed for having more than 100 bass yabbies in his possession. For all other crayfish in Victoria it is an offence to have berried females in your possession. There was no requirement to return berried *Cherax spp* in Victorian Fisheries Regulations 2009 and there is no requirement to be able to distinguish between *Cherax* and non *Cherax* species. Protected crayfish species are still incorrectly taken for fishing bait.

The issue was first raised with the Fisheries ED in a letter dated 3/09/2008. Letters were sent to Joe Helper MP. The following are examples of replies received. From Fisheries Victoria. *"Please note any further correspondence from you regarding this matter will be recorded without reply."* From Joe Helper MP. *"Yabbies are widespread and plentiful throughout regional Victoria and the new regulation poses no threat to their sustainability"*. An interesting statement made during a severe drought. Thankfully the recreational limits have now changed and berried females must be returned. **The future solution to issues like the above is to make bureaucrats accountable when they give false or misleading information to ministers or the public.**

Issue 2 - EXCESSIVELY HIGH RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT FOR SWIMMER SHRIMP POTENTIALLY REDUCING A FOOD SOURCE FOR WILDLIFE.

“Overfishing of native shrimp (*Paratya australiensis*) under Fisheries (Shrimp) Notice No. 11/2009”.

Fisheries (Shrimp) Notice No. 11/2009. The allowable daily take of swimmer shrimp was altered from 100 per person per day to 0.5 litres per person per day. 0.5 litres is equivalent to over 2000 shrimp. This is a huge increase and cannot be justified in terms of sustainability for the future for the commercial and recreational take. There was no scientific evidence provided with the notice to support such a huge increase in the daily take. Freshwater shrimp are a food source for many species of fauna. Reducing this food source from an area will impact on the survival of these species.



PRACTICAL TEST TO SHOW THE NUMBER OF A SAMPLE OF SWIMMER SHRIMP THAT WOULD OCCUPY A 0.5 LITRE VOLUME

Approximately 400+ glass shrimp (*Paratya australiensis*). Counted by printing picture on A2 sheet and marking each shrimp counted excluding the very small ones.



Wet test. The measuring jug was filled to the 500 ml mark and the 400+ shrimp added. The increase was less than 100 ml.



Dry test. The 400+ shrimp were placed into the jug and after the shrimp stopped jumping around the volume was observed to be approximately 100 ml.

Recreational Fishers are permitted to take 500ml per person per day. That's over 2000 shrimp pppd. This is excessive and cannot be justified in terms of sustainability for the future. There was no scientific evidence provided with the notice to support such a huge daily take. Freshwater shrimp are a food source for many species of fauna. Reducing this food source from an area will impact on the survival of these species.

Issue 3 - NO MONITORING OF AN FFG LISTED SPECIES (*Euastacus amatus*) WITH AN OPEN SEASON TO RECREATIONAL FISHING.

The Murray Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*) is listed under the FFG Act and its take for recreational purposes is authorised through a Governor in Council Order. I find it appalling that there is no effective method of monitoring the fishing of this listed species. There is no requirement for recreational anglers to report on their level of take of this species (FOI document). During open season recreational fishers are permitted to take 5 crayfish per person per day. Other species of fish are released into our waterways for restocking and fishing by recreational fishers, but not crustaceans. Crayfish play an important role in our ecosystem by helping to keep our waterways clean of rotting matter. Thus good numbers must be maintained.

We need effective methods of monitoring to enable the health and abundance of this FFG listed fish to be determined? We need to immediately determine the health and abundance of this FFG listed fish before the next open season? The latest survey by an Honours student shows that the Murray Spiny Crayfish an FFG listed species is in real trouble. In my opinion this is due to lack of consistent monitoring and bad senior fisheries management. An FOI document reveals that there is no monitoring of the recreational take of spiny crayfish.

EFFECTS OF RECREATIONAL FISHING PRESSURE ON THE MURRAY CRAYFISH (*Euastacus armatus*) IN THE LOWER OVENS RIVER, NORTH EAST VICTORIA

Thesis by Verita R Stewart

Verita Stewart was an Honours student at La Trobe University Albury-Wodonga.

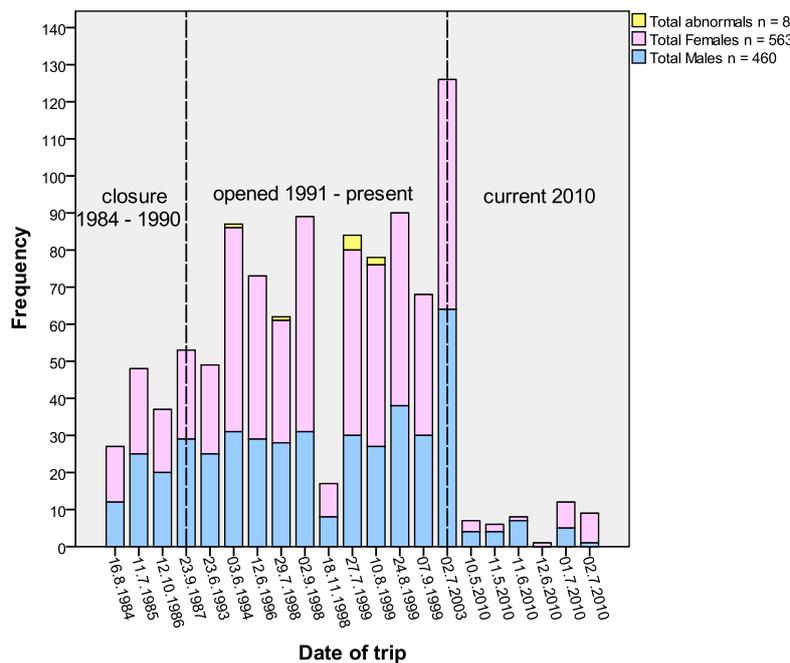


Figure 3.1. Histogram illustrating the frequency of male, female and abnormal Murray crayfish caught in the Ovens River from 21 surveys during the period of 1984 – 2010.

THE SIZE OF OUR WATERWAYS REMAIN UNCHANGED BUT THE NUMBER THAT FISH INCREASES EVERY YEAR. Common sense would tell you that as the number that fish increases the daily take must decrease to maintain sustainability.

The future solution to issues like the above is to make bureaucrats accountable. A method of monitoring would be to have a check box with fee for spiny crayfish on the issue of recreational fishing licences. This would then give you an estimate to the number that fish for spiny crayfish.

Yours Sincerely
Stephen Chara