



APYAC Represented at National Murray Darling Carp Action Summit

“What You Can Expect From Today”

The National Murray Darling Carp Action Summit opened with three powerful themes that set the tone for what would become one of the most important fisheries and environmental forums APYAC has ever attended.

The Challenge – Why Are We Here?

The opening sessions focused on building a shared understanding of the true scale and urgency of Australia’s carp crisis.

Presenters detailed the devastating environmental, cultural and economic impacts caused by carp throughout the Murray Darling Basin, while openly acknowledging where current management approaches are falling short.

The statistics alone were confronting:

more than 300 million carp are now estimated throughout the Basin, in some areas making up as much as 90% of the total fish biomass.

The Shift – What Needs to Change?

As the Summit progressed, discussions turned toward the pathways available to create a more coordinated and effective response.

This included identifying:

- where current efforts are fragmented
- what barriers are preventing meaningful progress
- where governments, communities, science and industry can better align
- and what opportunities exist to finally shift from discussion to action.

The Commitment – What Could a Murray Darling Carp Action Alliance Do?

The final sessions focused on the proposed formation of a Murray Darling Carp Action Alliance.

Importantly, this was not about creating another organisation for the sake of it. The discussion centred around identifying where an alliance could provide genuine value by connecting science, community groups, recreational fishers, Indigenous organisations, governments and environmental leaders into one coordinated force.

It was clear from the room that the appetite for action is growing rapidly.

And importantly for APYAC, so too is the recognition that recreational fishing clubs can and should play a leadership role in environmental restoration.

APYAC Invited to the National Murray Darling Carp Action Summit

Albert Park Yachting & Angling Club continues to cement itself as one of the most respected and influential recreational fishing voices in Australia, with APYAC proudly represented at the invitation-only National Murray Darling Carp Action Summit held in Nagambie on the banks of the Goulburn River.

Hosted by VFA and the Australian River Restoration Centre, the Summit brought together more than 80 representatives from over 40 organisations across the Murray Darling Basin, including scientists, politicians, fisheries managers, conservation leaders, Indigenous organisations, water authorities, agricultural leaders and recreational fishing advocates.

What makes APYAC's inclusion in events such as this so significant is that we were the only angling club represented because our voice, knowledge base and conservation leadership are now recognised as being genuinely important to fisheries decision-making, not only in Victoria, but increasingly at a national and international level.

This recognition is no accident.

APYAC continues to produce and attract leaders deeply respected throughout the recreational fishing, conservation and fisheries management sectors, including:

- Bob Pearce – APYAC Conservation Specialist and former VRFish Board member
- Terry George – former President of the Australian Trout Foundation
- John Spragg – President of the Victorian Fly Fishing Association and VRFish Board member
- Cody McLeod – one of the youngest ever VRFish Board members and a rising force in conservation leadership
- ME – President of APYAC, Board member VRFish, VFA RFL Trust Advisory & WIRFAB Ambassador
- Along with countless other APYAC members contributing expertise across habitat restoration, governance, science, advocacy and community engagement.

Our club's growing influence comes from something much bigger than fishing alone.

APYAC has become recognised as a club willing to educate itself, collaborate, challenge outdated thinking and actively help repair the environmental damage humans have caused to our waterways and marine ecosystems.

That reputation matters.

And it is why organisations such as the Victorian Fisheries Authority continue to ensure APYAC has a seat at the table.

The Carp Crisis

For many outside the Murray Darling Basin, the scale of the carp problem is difficult to comprehend.

Carp destroy aquatic vegetation, muddy waterways, reduce water quality, damage wetlands, destroy native fish breeding habitat and contribute to ecosystem collapse across enormous sections of Australia's inland river systems.

The Summit heard repeatedly that this is no longer simply a fisheries issue.

It is now:

- an environmental issue
- an agricultural issue
- a regional economic issue
- a cultural issue
- and potentially even a human health issue.

One particularly powerful presentation came from NSW Member for Murray, Helen Dalton, whose passion and frustration electrified the room.

Helen spoke strongly about the need for urgent action and highlighted growing concerns regarding environmentally linked health impacts, including increased cases of Motor Neuron Disease (MND) in areas heavily affected by degraded water systems and blue-green algae outbreaks.

Her message was simple:

regional communities are tired of endless studies and bureaucracy - they want action.

Science, Politics and Community United

One of the most inspiring aspects of the Summit was seeing so many sectors united behind a common goal.

The event was brilliantly chaired by Dr Siwan Lovett, founder and CEO of the Australian River Restoration Centre, whose ability to bring together science, government, community and industry was exceptional.

The Summit featured an extraordinary lineup of presenters and contributors, including:

- Travis Dowling – CEO of the Victorian Fisheries Authority
- Senator David Pocock
- Associate Professor Ivor Stuart
- Ryan Markwick from the Taungurung Land and Water Council
- Cassie Price – CEO of OzFish Unlimited
- Steve “Starlo” Starling
- Darren Willis
- Chris Roylance
- Warrick Ragg

- Dr Toby Piddocke
- Anthony Forster
- Reece Pianta
- Ocean2Earth's Tim from Wilcannia
- Darren Chester MP

The diversity of presenters reinforced something APYAC strongly believes:

lasting environmental change only happens when science, Indigenous knowledge, community, government and recreational fishers work together.

VRFish Leading From the Front

A standout across both the Recreational Fisher Leaders Forum and the Carp Action Summit was VRFish Executive Officer Anthony McGrath.

Anthony delivered presentations that were direct, engaging, highly professional and extremely well received by a room packed with influential stakeholders and experts from around Australia.

His ability to communicate the importance of recreational fishing, healthy waterways and community involvement cut through the complexity of the issue brilliantly.

Anthony's leadership in the recreational fishing space continues to grow nationally, and APYAC was incredibly proud to see him representing Victorian fishers so strongly.

Having recently represented Australia alongside APYAC President Lee Spyrou at the World Recreational Fishing Conference in South Africa — which Anthony had previously attended earlier in life at the Brazil conference — his experience and perspective now place him among Australia's most important emerging leaders in recreational fisheries advocacy.

VRFish's recommendations to the 2026 Basin Plan Review strongly advocated for:

- funded carp control programs
- native fish recovery
- habitat restoration
- improved river flows
- fish passage improvements
- wetland rehabilitation
- and long-term environmental repair throughout the Murray Darling Basin.

The Role of the Carp Virus

One of the most discussed topics throughout the Summit was the proposed release of the carp herpes virus as part of a broader national carp control strategy.

Importantly, attendees heard detailed presentations surrounding the extensive scientific testing already undertaken to ensure the virus is species-specific and does not impact native fish populations or other aquatic species.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority has undertaken significant work in this space and continues to advocate strongly for action. The scale of the carp problem is now so severe that many experts believe large-scale intervention is unavoidable if Australia's waterways are to recover.

APYAC's Conservation Future

For APYAC, this Summit strongly reinforced the direction our club is already heading.

Our work alongside the Victorian Fisheries Authority, OzFish, VRFish and many other partners on projects such as reef restoration, habitat repair and marine ecosystem recovery is now being recognised well beyond Port Phillip Bay.

Through projects such as Kayakers Reef and our growing partnerships with conservation groups and fisheries leaders, APYAC is helping demonstrate that recreational fishing clubs can be much more than social venues.

We can be:

- leaders in restoration
- leaders in education
- leaders in stewardship
- and leaders in shaping the future of fisheries management.

Perhaps most importantly, the Summit reminded everyone in the room that recreational fishers are not the problem.

We are one of the greatest untapped forces for environmental recovery in Australia.

And APYAC is proud to be helping lead that charge.

Where Can APYAC Contribute?

Following the Summit, several clear opportunities emerged where APYAC can genuinely help make a difference.

1. Habitat Restoration Leadership

Continue expanding our reef restoration and habitat repair work in partnership with:

- VFA
- OzFish
- VRFish
- Australian Trout Foundation
- Victorian Fly Fishing Association
- local environmental groups and Indigenous organisations.

2. Community Education

Host educational forums, guest speaker nights and conservation workshops focused on:

- carp impacts
- native fish recovery
- waterway health
- catch and release best practice
- habitat restoration.

3. Youth Leadership Development

Encourage and support emerging young conservation leaders within APYAC through mentoring, participation in forums and environmental projects.

4. Citizen Science Programs

Assist with data collection, habitat monitoring, fish tagging and restoration programs that support scientific research and long-term fisheries management.

5. Advocacy & Representation

Continue ensuring recreational fishers have a respected voice at state, national and international forums.

APYAC's inclusion at events such as this demonstrates that our club is now recognised as a serious contributor to fisheries and environmental policy discussions.

6. Building Stronger Partnerships

Strengthen relationships with:

- Indigenous organisations
- farmers
- government agencies
- universities
- conservation groups
- and regional communities.

The Summit made it abundantly clear:
real environmental recovery will only happen when everybody works together.

And APYAC intends to be part of that solution.

Lee Spyrou

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