

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Environment
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Outdoor Recreation



Friday, 10 October 2025

FRESH OYSTERS TO CREATE FRESH JOBS FOR VICTORIANS

Victorian seafood consumers are one step closer to enjoying locally grown oysters thanks to an aquaculture trial, backed by the Allan Labor Government.

Minister for Outdoor Recreation Steve Dimopoulos today celebrated the excellent results from the first three years of the trial in the Gippsland Lakes to determine how well Sydney Rock Oysters (*Saccostrea glomerata*) grow in the system.

The trial has been assessing the viability, growth rates, eating quality and food safety of Sydney Rock Oysters, which are native to Gippsland, at four sites around Flannagans and Rigbys Islands, west of Lakes Entrance.

Oysters produced in the Gippsland Lakes trial so far are growing at similar rates to established oyster farms in the estuaries of southern New South Wales at Merimbula and Pambula.

The \$250,000 trial is part of the Allan Labor Government's \$96 million package to improve aquaculture, fishing, boating and piers and has been boosted more recently by a \$400,000 investment from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, on behalf of the Australian Government, to aid its expansion.

The trial is a partnership between the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) and the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA). GLaWAC and the VFA are expanding the trial this month through the addition of 60,000 oysters that will find homes in two of the existing growing sites and three new ones nearby, all in water less than one metre deep.

The expansion will improve understanding of the commercial viability of the project and oyster growth under higher stocking densities, typical of commercial operations.

A native oyster industry in the Gippsland Lakes would create jobs for Gunaikurnai, support regional tourism and supply fresh, local and sustainable seafood. This could see Victorian-grown Sydney Rock Oysters back on the menu for seafood lovers, which would be a huge win for Victoria.

Existing oyster aquaculture interstate is worth over \$100 million, so if the trial is successful and permanent oyster farming becomes established, it could lead to significant economic prosperity for Gippsland Lakes towns.

For more information visit www.vfa.vic.gov.au/oystertrial

Quotes attributable to Minister for Outdoor Recreation Steve Dimopoulos

"This trial is laying the groundwork for local jobs, skills and opportunities, leading to long-term benefits for the region – and we're backing it every step of the way because we're on your side."

"There's nothing better than fresh, local seafood – and it's exciting to think that Victorians could soon enjoy oysters grown right here in the Gippsland Lakes."

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Quote attributable to Interim CEO Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation Charee Smith

“This expansion is another step toward a self-determined future for Gunaikurnai people - grounded in Country, guided by culture, and driven by our own priorities. But this isn’t just for us. If we get it right, it creates jobs, skills and opportunities that flow right across the region.”

Quote attributable to FRDC Research and Development Investment General Manager Crispian Ashby

“This project is aimed at exploring the opportunity for sustainable and commercially viable Sydney Rock Oyster aquaculture in Victoria. It’s exciting for FRDC to support a project that is collecting critical data and insights into the potential of this new aquaculture industry in Eastern Victoria.”