

# Media Release

Friday 25 June 2021 | Media contact: Justine Severin 0436 674 804

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## CONTROL AREA REDUCED AS PART OF ABALONE RESPONSE

Boating, diving and fishing resumes in Portland and Discovery Bay this first school holiday weekend with the abalone disease Control Area reduced in size.

The new Control Area – which spans from the western tip of Bridgewater Bay to Cape Sir William Grant some eight kilometres west of Portland – is effective from 12am Saturday (26 June).

Fishing and boating restrictions no longer apply east of Cape Grant through to Narrawong (which includes Portland) and Discovery Bay in the west.

Victoria's Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Graeme Cooke said the decision to reduce the Control Area came after thorough surveillance.

"We now have a clear understanding of where the disease is currently present. Because of this, we're able to open areas for boating and fishing, with very low risk of spreading the disease," Dr Cooke said.

"Reducing the areas under control will support both commercial and recreational sectors and is an important step in the long-term management around this disease."

Outside the Control Area, fishing, diving and boating activities can occur as normal.

"In the Control Area, you can fish and chase tuna with an unweighted line, take your boat out (provided you do not anchor), swim, surf and paddleboard.

"However, you cannot anchor your boat, fish with a weighted sinker, dive, use commercial or recreational fishing equipment such as hoop nets, bait traps and hauling nets, collect abalone or shellfish or anything from the sea floor."

The initial Control Area was put in place on 4 May to allow delimiting surveillance after wild abalone tested positive for abalone viral ganglioneuritis disease off the coast of Cape Nelson.

On 23 May, the area was expanded west after a further detection at Cape Bridgewater.

Dive surveys have been undertaken at each of the reefs. All samples from the reefs that are re-opening for fishing and boating activities have tested negative.

"We know now that the infected abalone currently remains localised to two south-west locations," Dr Cooke said.

"Although we're able to make this positive step in reducing the Control Area, this does not mean the risk has gone. We know that this disease exists in the marine environment and can reappear at any time.

"Everyone has a part to play in biosecurity and limiting the spread of pests and diseases.

"Always wash your boat and any gear you have used with soap and freshwater thoroughly. This includes fishing rods, wetsuits.

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“Thank you to everyone in the community, fishers, boat captains and industry for supporting this response, doing the right thing and following the restrictions.”

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