

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Water

Minister for Police and Emergency Services



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FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

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EXTINCT FISH SIGHTING BACK FROM THE DEAD

An extremely rare fish thought to be extinct has been reportedly spotted for the first time in over two decades during a lake recovery project in regional Victoria.

Two Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon fish (*Mogurnda adspersa*) are believed to have been identified during fish population surveys at Third Reedy Lake, Kerang.

If confirmed, this would be the only remaining population of the species in Victoria after it was declared extinct in 1998 under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act)*.

The two fish were spotted on October 29 by crews engaged by the Connections Project to restore Third Reedy Lake to its original state as a deep, freshwater marsh.

The project involves relocating native fish from the lake to more suitable habitats in nearby waterways.

Works stopped as soon as the fish were discovered and the lake draw down process has been temporarily halted until the sighting is confirmed through DNA testing.

The fish were safely returned after photos and a small sample from a fin were taken for further analysis, with the test results expected to determine their origin within coming weeks.

If confirmed, the Andrews Labor Government will work with Water Corporations, Catchment Management Authorities, Victorian Fisheries Authority, environmental consultants, fish experts and the community to develop an appropriate strategy to protect and recover this rare species.

The Third Reedy Lake project is part of the \$2 billion Connections Project - Australia's largest irrigation modernisation project which includes restoring lakes previously used within the irrigation system to a more natural condition.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

"This is a major environmental discovery - potentially recovering a native Victorian species that has been extinct for over two decades."

"This rare sighting shows the work we're doing to protect our waterways and their precious ecosystems is working."

Quote attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"Lakes, waterways and wetlands provide habitat for an array of native plants and animals and our strong biodiversity program will ensure they have a home for generations to come."