



Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Ageing

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Our Ref: ADD/12/20979

Your Ref:



Dear 

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 February and 28 May 2012 regarding your concerns about mercury pollution in the Gippsland Lakes.

A review of the available literature indicates that fish caught in the Gippsland Lakes are suitable for human consumption. The literature shows that the mean concentrations of mercury in black bream fish from the Gippsland Lakes are below the Food Standards Australia New Zealand permitted maximum concentration for mercury in fish¹. Black bream fish are considered to be a representative fish for contaminant levels and are also fished commercially.

The literature indicates that mercury is present within the sediment of the Gippsland Lakes, however a better measure of mercury bioaccumulation by organisms is methylmercury rather than total mercury.

The Victorian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) are the authorities that monitor aspects of the aquatic environment. Your concerns regarding mercury pollution would be more appropriately addressed to these authorities. The Environmental Assessment Unit of the EPA can be contacted by phone on 1300 372 842; the fisheries and marine section of the DPI and the DSE, respectively, can be contacted by phone on 136 186.

Thank you for raising this matter with me. If you wish to discuss the matter further, please contact the department's Environmental Health Program on 1300 761 874.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rosemary Lester
Chief Health Officer

¹ Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code - Standard 1.4.1 - Contaminants and Natural Toxicants
<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodstandards/foodstandardscode.cfm>