



# Media Release

From the Department of Natural Resources and Environment

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## July 2002. ASIA AWAITING PORT PHILLIP BAY JELLYFISH

Port Phillip Bay holds the key to a brand new export industry sending dried jellyfish to China and Asia, according to research carried out by the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute at Queenscliff.

Dried jellyfish is considered a delicacy in many Asian countries, including Japan, where it is prized. Increasing demand for the jellyfish has opened up opportunities for Victoria's exports.

A native jellyfish, *Catostylus mosaicus*, found in Victorian coastal waters, belongs to the same family as edible jellyfish fished in other parts of the world and is a potential candidate for harvest. Initial processing trials in the late 1990's revealed that these jellyfish could be caught in summer and autumn. Dried jellyfish with the tentacles removed, were prepared for taste tests and more than met the quality requirements of the Asian markets.

Following the initial trials, a three year investigation by MAFRI into jellyfish numbers along the coast to see if a fishery would be sustainable has been carried out. The final report will be available soon, project leader, Dr Noel Coleman said. The project is funded by Fisheries Victoria and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

The jellyfish fishery was declared a development fishery for a period of two years while the work was undertaken. Jellyfish numbers were investigated in Port Phillip, Western Port and Corner Inlet. Numbers and biomass varied considerably from year to year as well as between localities, with Port Phillip having the highest abundance and Western Port the lowest. Reasons for the variability are not understood but are probably related to water temperature and salinity, Dr Coleman said.

The research revealed that Port Phillip could support a jellyfish fishery of several thousand tonnes in some years, although this would not be the case every year. The results will help Fisheries Victoria determine the total allowable catch and most appropriate fishing season for the developing fishery.

A Melbourne based company is already working in partnership with a Chinese processing company to prepare and process jellyfish for export. The company has established links with a processor in Queenscliff.

Jellyfish caught from Port Phillip Bay as part of the research were supplied to the local processor who used them to develop his processing method with supervision from Chinese processing experts.