

Life-release in Canberra waters

The ACT Government recognises the Buddhist tradition of “life-release”, a practice to save animals destined for slaughter as a compassionate action. This factsheet is designed to help protect the health of our waterways and native species during “life-release” practices.

Releasing aquatic animals into the wild can be harmful for the animals being released and the native animals that call our waterways home.

What are the risks?

1. Many fish sold in Canberra fish markets and restaurants will not survive a live release.
 - > Non-native and saltwater fish are unlikely to survive outside of their natural ecosystem, such as Canberra’s fresh waters.
 - > Freshwater fish are at risk if the water is too cold, too warm, has the wrong water quality or is missing their food source.
 - > Native fish that have been raised in captivity and grown to adult-hood are unlikely to survive because they have not learnt to source food or escape predators.
2. Fish that do survive can harm wild native fish and animals, including species that are threatened with extinction.
 - > They may have diseases that can spread to wild native fish.
 - > They may eat, fight or take the breeding spots of native fish.
 - > They may become pests that the ACT Government must then try to control.

It is illegal to release any fish into any public water, rivers, lakes or ponds. All fish releases in the ACT require a permit from the ACT Government.

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If you would like to release fish you have sourced yourself, the ACT Government can offer you a free permit if the fish:

- > Meet the suitable species criteria,
- > Are from the list of accredited suppliers, and
- > Will be released into an approved waterway.

This information is available at: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/nature-conservation/fish>

Golden Perch and Murray Cod are both native to the ACT and are likely to survive and breed. They grow well in lakes and become an important part of the lake ecosystem.



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Permits

To apply for a permit, complete the **online Access Canberra Application for Licence to Export, Import or Release Live Fish**. You can also contact the **EPSDD Licensing and Compliance Team on 02 6207 6376/pcs.licensingandcompliance@act.gov.au**, or contact **Access Canberra on 13 22 81**.

Please note that releasing fish into Lake Burley Griffin may also require approval from the National Capital Authority. You can contact the National Capital Authority at lakeburleygriffin@nca.gov.au. Information from your permit request if it is to release fish into Lake Burley Griffin will be passed onto the National Capital Authority.

NSW Department Primary Industries permits are required to release fish in **Googong Reservoir** and the **Queanbeyan River**.

Your permit will tell you where you can release the fish in the ACT.

A Murray Cod released when 5 centimetres long in 1983 in Lake Ginninderra died naturally in 2011 at 1.2 metres long and 28 years old.

Buying direct from accredited hatcheries ensures fish have the best chance of survival, and helps to keep the Canberra's lakes and ponds healthy.



Penalties

Releasing fish without a permit is illegal. If you release fish illegally, you can be fined up to **\$5,000** or **6-month imprisonment** or both.

Young fish (less than 15 cm long) are more likely to survive because they have not lost their skills to live in the wild.



For more information

Further information and useful links are provided on the ACT Government environment website.

