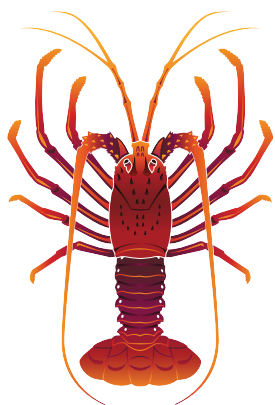


# 2023/2024 Annual Report



Western  
**ROCK  
LOBSTER**

World leading sustainable fishery



# WA Fishery Map







# Our Mission

OUR MISSION IS TO ENSURE  
THAT THE WRL FISHERY IS  
RESPECTED AND RECOGNISED  
AS AN ICONIC GLOBAL  
LEADER IN SUSTAINABLE  
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT.

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# From the Chair



While the entire period since the People's Republic of China (PRC) implemented its import ban on Australian lobster has been challenging for WRL members, 2023-24 was the most difficult for many. Four years of sustained low prices combined with rising capital, fuel, labour, bait and other costs has brought the viability of many fishers to the brink. In this regard, the WRL board pays homage to the endurance of our 750 West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery Licence holder members.

Unsurprisingly, commencing the second quarter of 2024-25 with an announcement from Prime Minister Albanese that a timetable for the full resumption of lobster trade by Christmas 2024 had been agreed with the PRC's Premier Li has delivered immeasurable relief to WRL members and the industry Australia-wide. This outcome has not simply been the consequence of a waiting game. For the past 4 years, WRL has worked tirelessly with colleagues in the Southern, Eastern and Tropical Rock Lobster sectors, Seafood Industry Australia and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to advise and support the Australian Government in its diplomacy on this matter.

On behalf of the WRL Board, I want to extend industry's gratitude to colleagues in the seafood industry and particularly officials in the Commonwealth Government whose expertise and professionalism was central to a positive outcome from the bilateral engagement with the PRC on this issue.

2023-24 was also a year that saw tremendous outcomes from a range of WRL initiatives. WRL's Back of Boat initiative is exemplar in this respect - simple, direct-to-consumer access to live product at important times of the year, combined with the experience of purchasing directly from fishers, is creating a tremendous positive interface between fishers and the Western Australian community. A special thanks needs to be extended to the 108 lobster boats who have supported and participated in the program.

I would also like to single out the Development Education Capacity Knowledge (DECK) program.

Delivered annually, this flagship WRL professional development initiative brings together current and emerging industry leadership to examine and deliberate over key economic, environmental, technological and social trends impacting the future of the western rock lobster industry. The acumen, passion and commitment of our emerging leaders that is evident at the DECK program paints a positive future for the western rock lobster industry.

WRL was disappointed by the Western Australian Government's decision to repeal the partly proclaimed Aquatic Resource Management Act 2016 (WA) ('ARMA'). While WRL had most certainly advocated for some amendments to ARMA before its full proclamation, principally to ensure resource access security for WRL members, this renowned, world-class fisheries regulatory framework was the product of over a decade of development and like many fisheries management experts, WRL held the ARMA framework in high regard - as did the Western Australian parliament hereunto now. Unfortunately, the decision to repeal ARMA places the industry in yet another protracted period of regulatory uncertainty.

Noting WRL's concerns with the Western Australian Government's decision with respect to ARMA, WRL did welcome and appreciate the Western Australian Government's invitation to propose a Terms of Reference for a review of the existing Fisheries Resource Management Act 1994 (WA) (FRMA). WRL has commenced working collaboratively and productively with other sectors of the Western Australian fishing and aquaculture industry and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development over the course of 2024-25 to achieve an expedited resolution to this uncertainty and the best outcome that can be achieved for WRL members within the constraints of the 30 year old FRMA framework.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank the WRL board and executive for their unwavering focus on serving the interests of western rock lobster fishers and the professional expertise that they deploy in delivering on that focus.

**Russell Barnett**

Independent Chair

# From the CEO



**The western rock lobster fishery has just experienced its fourth consecutive year of more than halved revenue to fishers and increased costs in catching and processing lobsters for export.**

Prior to the October 2020 China market closure for live Australian lobster, the western rock lobster industry generated in excess of \$455 million in gross value product (GVP), which resulted in \$505 million of value added to the Western Australian non-mining economy annually. Almost immediately following the market closure, the industry's GVP more than halved to \$207 million. This cumulative loss of over \$1 billion in value to the industry has had flow on effects through the iconic local coastal communities the western rock lobster industry supports, resulted in boats having exited the fishery, and made a significant number of other fishing operations currently uneconomic.

The four year halving of the GVP from the fishery and a three year rolling average to calculate WRL's 0.175% of GVP for representational income has meant this last year is the lowest revenue year for WRL as a representative peak body. It also means that any improvement in GVP will take years to flow through the rolling average formula and restore WRL's pre-closure revenue, which was around \$400k higher. Strategic emergency reserves built up over the three years prior to Covid-19, together with members' unanimous 2023 AGM approval to double the \$300 per MFL industry levy, has resulted in sufficient revenue to maintain WRL's high level and standard of service delivery.

Threats to western rock lobster resource access and fishing rights have increased dramatically over the last year and now form a significant component of our strategic focus and operational activity. Most notably was the Federal government process to declare a massive development area for offshore renewable energy off the coast of Busselton and Bunbury in WA's southwest. There is no doubt that the size and location of the development area will impact on western rock lobster fishers and whales migrating bi-annually between WA's northwest and the Southern Ocean. Most disappointing is the complete absence by the Federal government of any cost benefit analysis or risk assessment that

identifies this marine declared area as the most superior location for generating and supplying wind energy, compared to other areas including the many land-based options available that would occur without conflict from sustainable, generational, existing domain users.

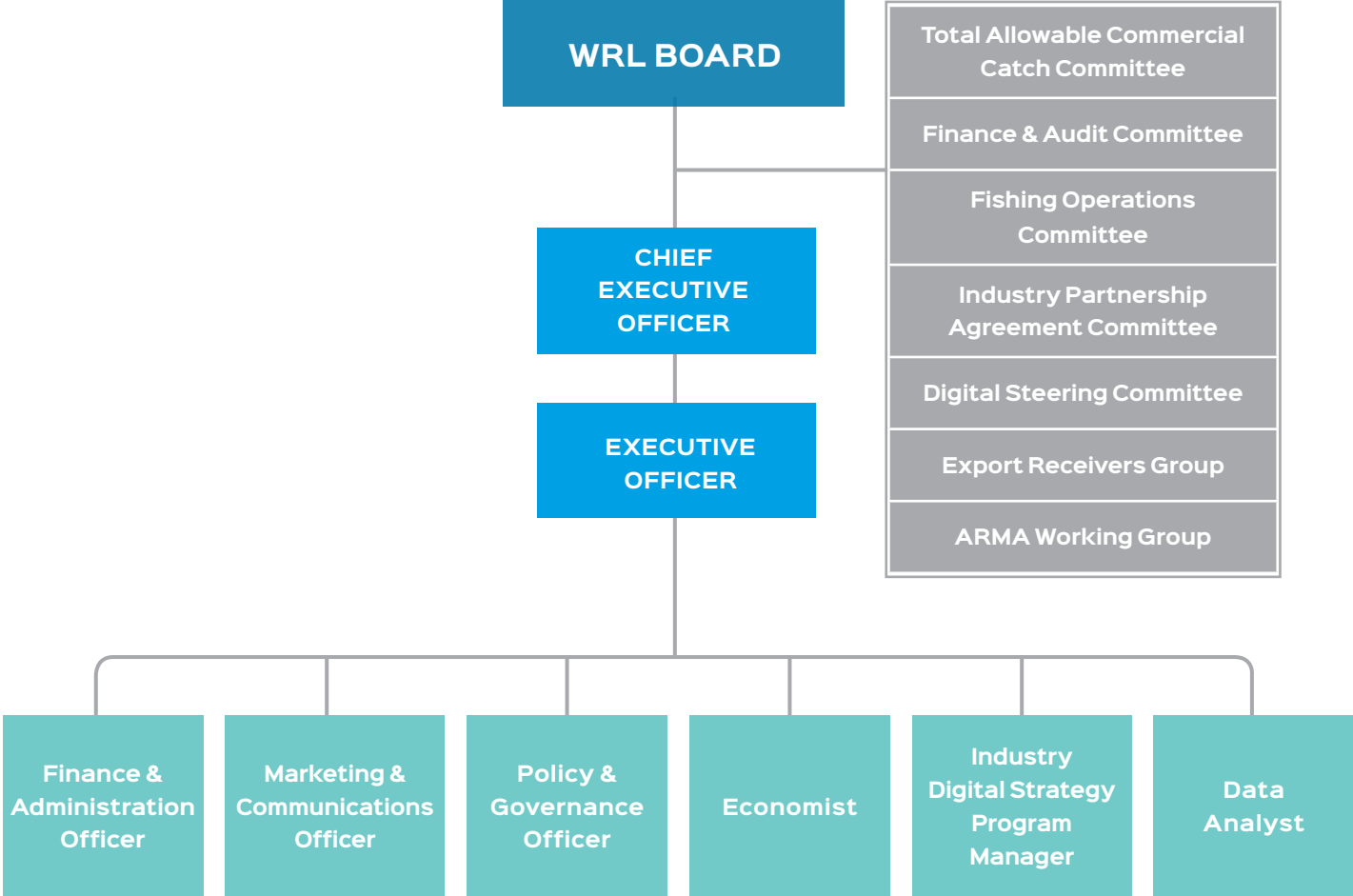
WRL has continued its national leadership under its Industry Partnership Agreement (IPA) with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) to produce a nationally significant RD&E portfolio that fulfills WRL's strategic objectives, addresses industry risks and supports the priorities outlined in the industry-derived RD&E Plan. The flagship program of digital transformation has this year produced valuable new technologies such as e-commerce and member portal platforms that improve data exchange, efficiency and experience for all stakeholders. The community engagement program is building meaningful connections and relationships between industry and the community through promotion and education, the economics and markets program underpins our world leading Total Allowable Commercial Catch setting process annually (currently at 7300 tonnes), and the biology, behaviour and ecology program is investigating the environmental causes behind unexpected variations in annual settlement and recruitment.

Over the last year, Salena Loasby has joined WRL as the Executive Officer and Joy Johnston has come on board in our new position of Policy and Governance Officer. I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the entire Executive team who are so dedicated and individually brilliant in their roles. They combine to create a team, who together with the board and excellent new Independent Chair Russell Barnett, have produced a model peak body of immense value to WRL members and the national seafood industry.

**Matt Taylor**

Chief Executive Officer

# Organisational Structure





# The Board

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Bruce Cockman  
Director,  
Northern Zone



Fedele Camarda  
Deputy Chair,  
Southern Zone



Justin Pirrottina  
Director,  
Northern Zone



Jared Groom  
Director,  
Northern Zone



Matthew Fong  
Director,  
Northern Zone



Peter Stanich  
Director,  
Southern Zone



Stephen Minutillo  
Director,  
Southern Zone



Mat Thompson  
Director,  
Southern Zone

## Independent Directors

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Russell Barnett  
Chair



Bradley Gannon  
Director

# The Executive Team

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**Matt Taylor**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



**Salena Loasby**  
Executive Officer



**Katherine Chow**  
Finance &  
Administration  
Officer



**Natalia Perez Haedo**  
Marketing &  
Communications  
Officer



**Joy Johnston**  
Policy & Governance  
Officer

## Industry Research Programs

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**Daniel Fels**  
Economist



**David Pietersen**  
Industry Digital  
Strategy Program  
Manager



**Chris King**  
Data Analyst





# Strategic Plan 2024-2027

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The Western Rock Lobster Strategic Plan assists our members, stakeholders and community by concisely communicating our vision, mission and objectives. This enables these stakeholders to understand the future direction of WRL as an organisation and where we aim to guide our industry.

Strategic Plans help organisations develop proactive strategies that assist the organisation to operate within changing environments and any prevailing risks. This is no different for Western Rock Lobster. Consequently, underpinning the Strategic Plan is WRL's Risk Management Framework. This framework enables the organisation to document, manage, monitor, review and update strategic, corporate and project risk information in full alignment with the strategic plan.

## Our Vision

By 2027, WRL will have the full confidence of government, the community and members, as a well-resourced, self-funded peak body engaged in advocacy and co-management for improved resource security.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure that the WRL fishery is respected and recognised as an iconic global leader in sustainable fisheries management.

## Our Objectives

1. Secure resource access and rights.
2. Ensure WRL is self-funded and well-resourced to deliver high quality advocacy and co-management of the resource.
3. Collaborate and invest in targeted R&D and technology to drive maximum economic yield and maintain market competitiveness.
4. Ensure the social licence to operate is supported by government, community and industry.
5. Support industry for market development.

## Our Priorities

1. Achieve greater resource access security through legislative change.
2. Review the strategy for securing independent funding.
3. Identify and implement new digital applications to improve efficiency and better decision-making across the value chain.
4. Conduct a project that demonstrates WRL's ability to co-manage the resource e.g. unit registry, quota trading platform, shallow water survey, lobster tagging program.
5. Seek additional funding for industry to identify and develop new and existing markets.



“ THE WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY  
IS AN ICONIC GLOBAL LEADER IN  
SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT. ”





# Western Rock Lobster Risk Register Summary





# The Top 14 Risks

1.  
Strategic

## Uncertainty around legislative framework and its application for resource access and security

Uncertainty increases volatility with operators and financing sector.

Risk Rating: 16

2.  
Strategic

## Reliance on a limited number of markets

Reliance on limited key markets increases vulnerability to market collapse, jeopardising financial security. Market expansion is critical to alleviate this risk but alternative markets are significantly smaller in scale and lower in profit.

Risk Rating: 12

3.  
Environmental

## Lobsters (at all life stages) being impacted by seismic activities and drilling off the coast of Western Australia

Drilling and seismic activity impacts on lobster health and habitat directly affect the health of the lobster biomass.

Risk Rating: 12

4.  
Operational

## Fuel Shortages

A shortage of fuel supplies due to AUS importing 90% of liquid fuels could lead to a shutdown of the fleet.

Risk Rating: 12

5.  
Environmental

## Changes to the environment due to climate change

Changes in climate and ocean currents might reduce the sustainability of the resource which would impact the viability of the industry.

Risk Rating: 12

6.  
Safety

## Decline in industry adherence to safety standards leading to a serious health event at sea or on shore

In addition to the impact on the injured, increased scrutiny by AMSA and Worksafe would reduce the industry's social licence to operate.

Risk Rating: 9

7.  
Reputational

## Loss of confidence in the quality of the product by the customers and markets

The quality of the premium WRL product could be discredited causing market and reputational damage.

Risk Rating: 9

8.  
Resource

## Changing fishing pressures on migrating lobster

Increases risk of over - and/or under - abundance of stock.

Risk Rating: 9

9.  
Resource

## Increased allocation of finite resource

Due to changing markets and increasing demands from recreational fishers, the TAC might be increased to unsustainable levels, reducing product value and industry sustainability.

Risk Rating: 9

10.  
Operational

## Decrease in the number of small, family-owned businesses due to younger generation fishers' unwillingness to enter industry

Younger fishers unwilling to take on the pressures of running a fishing business, when other industries offer higher security for less effort. Not being able to hand down fishing units to family without incurring cost as seen in the agriculture industry.

Risk Rating: 9

11.  
Operational

## Loss of access to fishing grounds due to offshore projects (spatial squeeze)

An increasing number of proposed projects off the coast of Western Australia threaten fishers' access to fishing grounds, a situation commonly referred to as "spatial squeeze."

Risk Rating: 9

12.  
Resource

## A decrease in puerulus survival and settlement

Gaps in understanding puerulus settlement may lead to improper stock management through TAC and MEY, threatening industry sustainability. Changes in post-puerulus survival trends could result in reduced recruitment to the biomass, risking fishery collapse.

Risk Rating: 8

13.  
Operational

## Re-allocation of units to competing industries due to undermined security

Lack of legislative resource access security raises the risk of reallocating units to competing industries, jeopardising the viability of the WRL commercial fishing industry. This reallocation directly impacts the fishery's sustainability.

Risk Rating: 8

14.  
Environmental

## Changes to the environment due to marine pollution caused by anthropogenic factors (eg shipping accidents, oil, chemical and container spills, toxins from ballast water)

WA's export-driven economy makes us more vulnerable to shipping traffic, raising the risk of collisions and pollution, which can jeopardise crew safety and stock health.

Risk Rating: 8

# Resource Access Security

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**Resource Access Security is central to Western Rock Lobster's (WRL) Strategy for Security, Independence, and Community Connection, and has been a top priority this year.**

This issue has prominently featured in communications with members and discussions with key stakeholders. The need to secure fishers' access to the western rock lobster resource has become even more pressing in 2024. This security is vital for preventing spatial squeeze in the Western Rock Lobster Managed Fishery (WRLMF). The Aquatic Resources Management Act 2016 (ARMA) aimed to enhance resource access certainty, but the announcement to repeal it in May 2024 shifted focus to amending the Fish Resources Management Act 1994, sidelining resource access security and compensation discussions. WRL urgently convened with industry leaders to formulate a response to the surprising repeal announcement and ensure collective action for commercial fishers' resource access and compensation frameworks. As interest in ocean and coastal industrialisation grows, Western Australia faces threats from new energy projects, marine parks, and seismic surveys. These developments demand extensive engagement due to inadequate consultation and assessment processes for offshore energy projects. WRL has been actively collaborating with peak bodies on shared concerns, particularly regarding offshore wind farms and other resource access threats. Additionally, in 2024, WRL engaged with other Australian lobster fisheries and Seafood Industry Australia (SIA) to address common challenges and stay informed on developments in other jurisdictions.

## **Spatial squeeze**

### **Offshore Wind Farming**

The enactment of offshore electricity infrastructure legislation between 2021 and 2022 established the framework for offshore wind farming in Australian waters. The Commonwealth also announced "priority" areas for assessment for suitability for wind farming. In response, WRL developed an industry position paper relating to offshore wind farms which outlined key concerns, specified expectations regarding avoidance and

mitigation of impacts, and identified detailed information required from project proponents for consultation purposes. This position paper, released in late 2023, is available on the WRL website and has been provided to potential proponents of wind farm feasibility licence applications. WRL's position is that wind farming in WA should be on land and not offshore. WRL have extensive concerns relating to offshore wind farming and resource access security as it is likely to impact both physical access to valued fishing sites within the WCRLMF, and the security of the lobster life cycle and development through contamination, noise pollution and disruption to the environment. In February 2024, an area offshore of Bunbury was proposed to be declared as suitable for offshore renewable energy. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water invited submissions and conducted consultations on this proposal. WRL made a submission to this process and engaged in local consultations. However, the consultative process was widely acknowledged as inadequate and a Senate Inquiry into the process was announced on 3 July 2024. WRL made submission to that inquiry, a copy of which was circulated to members. In August 2024 an amended site was declared suitable for wind farming off the coast near Bunbury. WRL maintain that there has been insufficient economic and scientific evaluation of the potential impact of wind farming off the WA coast to justify declaration of the area. WRL will continue to fight spatial squeeze and protect the resource access rights of members.

### **Murchison Green Hydrogen (MGH) Plant**

WRL is deeply concerned about a proposed green hydrogen plant near Kalbarri that plans to export ammonia by sea. An accidental ammonia leak could be devastating to the marine environment and fishery. Throughout 2024, WRL attended project briefings and provided updates to members as MGH conducted environmental





and planning assessments. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) require MGH to lodge an Environmental Review Document (ERD) addressing concerns about potential impacts on benthic communities, coastal processes, marine quality, and fauna. The ERD is expected to be submitted in December 2024 and will be open for public comment for four weeks, likely in January 2025. WRL will collaborate with government and industry stakeholders to identify shared concerns and will submit a detailed response to the EPA once the ERD is released for comment.

### **Alkimos Seawater Desalination Plant**

WRL is a member of the Water Corporation Alkimos Seawater Desalination Plant Community Reference Panel and participated in project briefings and meetings regarding the plant's planning and construction. In 2024, WRL informed local members about geophysical (seismic) surveys conducted to guide the design and construction of relatively shallow ocean intake and discharge pipelines, aiming to minimise environmental impacts. Subsequent project meetings have focused on land-based development, with reports on marine aspects expected in late 2024.

### **Marmion Marine Park Expansion**

The government announced plans to expand the Marmion Marine Park in 2022. WRL participated in planning meetings for the proposed Indicative Joint Management Plan (IJMP) and strongly opposed the expansion of any zones that excluded commercial lobster fishing. WRL maintains there is no evidence or justification for the removal of resource access for fishers based on habitat or biodiversity concerns. WRL argues ours is a net positive impact on biodiversity, through the introduction of bait to initiate food chains, and that MSC certification and environmental risk assessments demonstrate our fishing operations do not impact on habitat.

The State has postponed the release of final proposed sanctuary zones for public comment until after the 2025 election, and no further meetings took place in 2023/24. WRL will continue to vigorously advocate for the interests of the WRLMF on this issue.

### **Seismic Survey**

Pilot Energy plans to conduct a seismic survey off the WA coast near Dongara for oil and gas exploration (Eureka 3D Marine Seismic Survey) in either 2025 or 2026. After extensive consultations with members, WRL submitted feedback to NOPSEMA on the Environmental Plan (EP) for the project. WRL emphasised the need for further research on the effects of seismic activity on western rock lobsters before any work begins. An amended EP was submitted in February 2024 and is currently under assessment by NOPSEMA. WRL continues to engage with the Eureka project, which is expected to conduct its survey in either 2025 or 2026, to address seismic impact knowledge gaps and identify opportunities to apply new technologies for seismic surveys to minimise impacts. Additionally, WRL was contracted by Pilot Energy to evaluate the existing compensation model, the NERA Commercial Fishing Industry Adjustment Protocol (CFIAP), and proposed an alternative method for assessing seismic impacts on the fishery. This alternative could enable a more accurate calculation of compensation for WRL members and support sustainable biomass management.

# Sustainability

## Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The western rock lobster fishery is proud to have received an MSC Special Recognition Award in 2023 for attaining world-leading fifth certification. The WRL fishery was the world's first fishery to be certified as ecologically sustainable in line with the MSC standard in 2000, in recognition of the high environmental values and sustainable practices maintained by members. WRL have successfully retained continuous certification, obtaining our fifth certification in November 2022, and earning a positive audit report in November 2023. The current certification assessment standards broaden and increase the requirements that the DPIRD and WRL co-managed fishery must achieve. WRL are vigilant in engaging with DPIRD and the industry to identify and respond to specific matters relevant to the MSC standards and the sustainability of the fishery. The November 2023 audit report remarked on the high stock state and the ongoing effectiveness of the harvest strategy.

The MSC Fisheries Standard has three essential principles to which WRL is strongly committed:

- Sustainable Fish Stocks. Fishing must be at a level that ensures it can continue indefinitely and the fish population can remain productive and healthy;
- Minimising Environmental Impact. Fishing activity must be managed carefully so that other species and habitats within the ecosystem remain healthy; and
- Effective Fisheries Management. MSC certified fisheries must comply with relevant laws and be able to adapt to changing environmental circumstances.

WRL continues to maintain specific measures designed to ensure western rock lobster is a sustainable resource and secure its MSC certification including:

- Limited vessel licences and pot numbers;
- A quota system that limits the total commercial catch each year;
- Harvest levels that allow the stock to increase year on year;
- Protecting female lobster in breeding condition;
- Setting size limits on legal lobsters to maximise breeding potential;
- Developing and using low-impact fishing gear to protect the ocean environment;
- Maintaining current knowledge of new technology and development of fishing gear designed to protect WA's endangered species;
- Gear modifications to reduce the risk of whale entanglement during the peak migration periods;
- Continued focus on the removal of plastics from the industry; and
- Ensuring bait comes from sustainable sources.

In addition to MSC certification for the fishery, the four highest volume western rock lobster processors, Geraldton Fishermen's Cooperative, Indian Ocean Rock Lobster, KB Food Co and Bluwave, who account for 97% of market share, have all been awarded MSC Chain of Custody certification. This is the world's most recognised certification program for supplying wild-caught, sustainable seafood.





## Stock Assessment

The annual Western Rock Lobster Stock Assessment is conducted following the completion of the puerulus settlement season. The 2023 stock assessment was made available to members via email in July and was discussed in detail by DPIRD's scientists at industry's Annual Management Meetings in September.

The stock assessment indicates that the puerulus settlement has been relatively poor for the last three years. Poor recruitment into legal stock is resulting from the recent years of lower puerulus settlement. Egg production remains very high, however it has reached its peak, as has total biomass, given the TACC was increased 10% to 7300 tonnes for the 2023/24 financial year season in order to achieve a harvest rate that is within the range for the agreed principle of Maximum Economic Yield (MEY). Catch per unit effort in terms of kilos per pot lift has been reducing over the last three years but remains very high in historical terms at around 4kg/pot lift. Effort has been increasing with catch while boat numbers have again decreased. The stock assessment is available on the WRL website for members to view.

## Harvest Strategy 2023 – 2028

A new harvest strategy for the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery has been agreed between DPIRD, WRL and Recfishwest. The expanded modern harvest strategy's long-term objective is to manage the WCRL resource by delivering predictable, ecologically sustainable harvest levels and allocations of western rock lobster that maintain the stock near a MEY-based target level while securing access to the resource, thus maximising the opportunities to generate optimal long term economic returns to the state from commercial lobster fishing, processing, and ancillary activities, while optimising experiences for the recreational (including charter) sector.





# Fisheries Legislation

Implementation of the Aquatic Resources Management Act 2016 (ARMA) was scheduled to occur in November 2023. ARMA's main objective was to legally recognise fishing access rights for all sectors.

During early 2023, WRL had provided significant legal and policy advice opposing the DPIRD interpretation of the legislation and, together with industry peak bodies, sought clarity and action from the government to secure the objectives of ARMA. However, in August 2023, the Minister for Fisheries delayed the implementation of ARMA until industry concerns could be considered in further detail. WRL and the other industry peak bodies worked to reach agreement with DPIRD and the Minister regarding key industry concerns in the hope of reverting to implementation within a short timeframe. In June 2024, the Minister announced government would repeal ARMA and instead commit to maintaining the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (FRMA) as the primary fisheries legislation for WA.

Following years of industry preparation for replacing the FRMA with a modern legislative framework, WRL was disappointed by this decision, particularly as it was made without prior notice to the industry. In response, WRL and other peak fishing bodies convened to formulate a unified industry position in response to both the repeal of ARMA and the basis upon which the Minister proposed State fishing policy and legislation be predicated. The WRL Board has identified this as a major threat to our members' and the fishery's future. This issue has been discussed widely with members, including during the 2024 Coastal Tour. WRL is exploring all options to secure resource access and protect the fishery from spatial squeeze threats and is committed to working with other industry peak bodies and the government to achieve better outcomes for the seafood industry and community.



# National Lobster Working Group

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The outbreak of COVID-19 occurred around Australia Day 2020 and caused the western rock lobster fishery to close for three months.

By May that same year, wet markets in China had re-opened and prices started to recover, but then in October 2020 China revoked import quotas for live Australian lobsters. Almost immediately, the four commercial lobster fisheries around Australia (westerns, southern, eastern and tropical) convened the national Lobster Working Group (LWG), comprising an industry manager and a dominant processor/exporter representing each fishery.

The LWG worked extremely effectively with SafeFish (UTAS/IMAS) to design a national sampling survey that was representative of the lobster from each fishery, some 1614 lobsters in total. Geraldton Fishermen's Cooperative and DPIRD, supported by WRL, then organised the collection of 522 lobsters from across the western rock lobster managed fishery for sampling by SafeFish. These lobster samples were tested by the WA Chemistry Centre with the results compiled into a technical report by SafeFish. A summary of the report was supplied by the Australian government to the Chinese customs agency GACC when completed in 2021. The report was able to provide comprehensive evidence that Australian live lobster were of the highest quality in the world and posed absolutely no food safety risk to consumers of their delicious white flesh.

The LWG, with leadership by WRL, continued its research agenda in addition to designing a China Re-engagement Strategy that seeks to build and nurture relationships with Chinese trade-related associations so that the Australian lobster industry has more effective communication and better understanding should a trade dispute occur in the future.

At the end of 2023, Chinese officials began engaging with Australian officials to restore trade of live Australian lobsters into mainland China. The Australian Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) worked extremely closely and collaboratively with the LWG. In addition to the efforts of many Australian Ministers, this LWG/DAFF relationship was instrumental in the October 2024 announcement by the Prime Minister that live lobster trade would be restored by the end of 2024. The LWG has been incredibly professional and successful in representing the best interests of the Australian lobster industry during its most critical four year period.







# Industry Partnership Agreement

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The Western Rock Lobster Council (WRL), in partnership with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), is driving key research, development, and extension (RD&E) initiatives to advance the western rock lobster industry.

This collaboration, formalised through the WRL-FRDC Industry Partnership Agreement (IPA), aligns with WRL's strategic objectives, addresses industry risks, and supports the priorities identified in the RD&E Plan.

To optimise resource allocation and investment decisions, WRL works closely with both FRDC and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). By focusing efforts on high-priority RD&E areas, this partnership ensures a targeted approach to achieving meaningful industry outcomes.

The planning and implementation of RD&E projects are shaped by a broad collaboration between WRL, FRDC, DPIRD, research providers, and key industry stakeholders. Consultation with WRL members, the Fishing Operations Committee and the Board ensures that initiatives remain relevant, effective and aligned with industry needs.

The flagship initiative under the WRL-FRDC Industry Partnership Agreement (IPA) is the Digital Transformation of the WRL industry. This program has led to the establishment of a member services platform, with its first successful service—the Back of Boat online ordering and payment system, already in operation. Two additional services are in development: environmental data collection and catch-to-plate traceability, both aimed at enhancing sustainability and transparency within the industry.

The Communication, Education and Engagement Program continues to lead nationally, effectively promoting the industry and strengthening social licence through diverse, innovative and impactful campaigns.

The Understanding the Economics and Markets Program has introduced critical industry benchmarking, adding valuable insights to ongoing Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) modelling and the annual global trade reports, further supporting informed decision-making and Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) setting within the sector.

Projects proposed under the Biology, Behaviour and Ecology Program encompass drivers for puerulus settlement, climate change effects on adult distribution, and discard mortality rate.

The Whale Entanglement Mitigation Program plays a crucial role in supporting ongoing research to reduce interactions between fishing operations and whales. Through funding various projects, the program seeks to deepen understanding of whale migration patterns, allowing for the development of targeted mitigation measures that minimise the impact on fishing activities while effectively reducing entanglements. Research efforts may also explore innovative gear modifications to prevent entanglements and enhance training and resources for safe disentanglement techniques.

These research programs and proactive initiatives position the WRL industry to implement effective mitigation strategies should whale interactions increase in the future. This collaborative approach reflects the industry's commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of both fishing operations and whale populations, fostering effective coexistence between whales and fishers.

Please visit [www.westernrocklobster.org/ipa](http://www.westernrocklobster.org/ipa) for more information on the programs and projects under the WRL-FRDC Industry Partnership Agreement.

# Industry Digital Strategy

## Transforming the WA Lobster Fishing Industry

The Industry Digital Strategy (IDS) is a comprehensive, forward-thinking plan that harnesses technology to address challenges and create opportunities across industry, government, and consumer sectors. Developed through extensive consultation with members and stakeholders, the IDS reflects a collective vision for digital outcomes and aims to implement interoperable and adaptable technologies that benefit all parties involved.

### Key Benefits of the IDS

- **Enhanced business efficiency:** Implementation of cutting-edge digital initiatives to streamline operations and boost productivity.
- **Fostering innovation:** Digitalisation opens doors to revolutionary business processes and operational models.
- **Competitive edge:** Strategic digital investments empower companies to thrive in the global marketplace.
- **Value creation:** The IDS unlocks new avenues for generating value across the supply chain.

This strategic roadmap serves as a guide for all stakeholders to embrace digital innovation and capitalise on opportunities, enhancing competitiveness in an increasingly complex international arena.

## Program Endorsement and Recognition

The IDS has received endorsement from the WA Minister for Fisheries, underscoring its significance. Its quality and relevance are further validated by the ongoing participation and support of the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and the federal Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

## Steering Committee

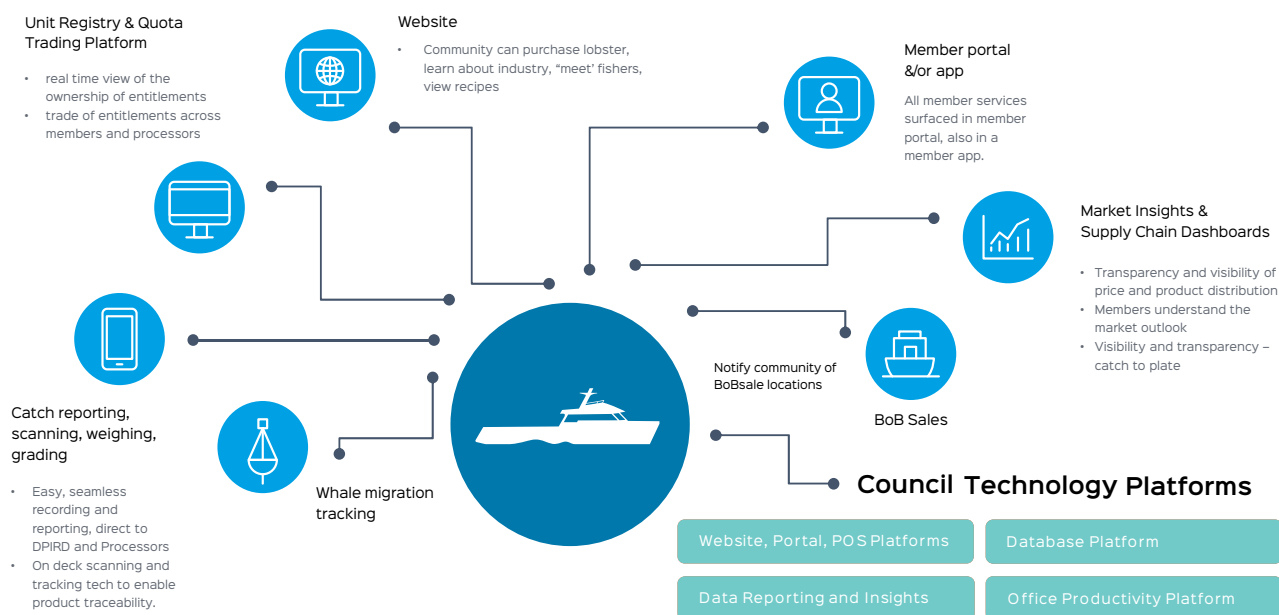
A high-calibre steering committee has been established to oversee the program's delivery. It comprises technical and managerial experts from Western Rock Lobster (WRL), DPIRD and FRDC. The committee is led by an independent chair, Mr. Brad Wearn, former CIO of BHP Billiton (Iron Ore).

## Strategic Goals

- Drive Gross Value Product (GVP) growth and secure resource access for the industry
- Enhance industry co-management of resources
- Implement new technologies and conduct targeted research and development
- Improve governance, decision-making, and process efficiencies
- Strengthen community engagement and advocacy

## Key Outcomes

- **Advanced catch management:** Real-time, on-board scanning applications for accurate catch and discard recording.
- **Traceability innovation:** Cutting-edge technology to track lobsters from catch to plate, enabling e-commerce while enhancing market value through provenance storytelling.
- **Dynamic entitlement management:** Real-time systems for buying, selling and leasing entitlements.
- **Environmental monitoring:** Systems to track gear, whale migrations and interaction behaviours.
- **Digital safety management:** Digitised workplace health and safety training, records management, and reporting.
- **Streamlined reporting:** Online platforms for efficient, real-time reporting to state and federal agencies and relevant supply chain partners.



## Collaborative Approach

The IDS is built on principles of resource optimisation and alignment with state and national initiatives. WRL collaborates closely with FRDC and other organisations to avoid duplication of efforts. This includes participation in external programs like the National Agrifood Data Exchange Project, contributing to DPIRD's digital strategy, and regular evaluation of the Western Australian Government's Digital Strategy Roadmap 2023.

## Progress and Future Plans

The first two years of the IDS have been approved under WRL's Industry Partnership Agreement with FRDC. Significant milestones have been achieved in the 2023/2024 financial year, laying a strong foundation for continued digital transformation in the seafood industry.

Through this comprehensive digital strategy, the Western Rock Lobster Council, in partnership with FRDC and DPIRD, is spearheading a transformation that promises to streamline operations and enhance efficiency across the entire supply chain, from catch to plate. WRL's pioneering will also benefit the broader seafood industry.

Over the 2023/2024 financial year, several key milestones have been achieved:

- Launched Back of Boat Day with 8000 lobsters being sold through the Back of Boat eCommerce system on the 23rd of December 2023 alone, and a further 1000 lobsters being sold across the month, representing one-third of all lobsters sold in December.
- Collected extensive feedback from fishers on how to improve the Back of Boat eCommerce system and implemented the improvements ready for Back of Boat Days 2024.
- Expanded our existing cloud environment to include Microsoft Dynamics 365.
- Implemented systems to improve and streamline payroll, leave management, customer relationship management and project management.
- Designed and built the Member Portal, a single access point for all member information and services.
- Conducted an industry workshop to determine the requirements for a single application for catch recording, real-time weather monitoring, cost recording (bait, fuel, wages) and vessel maintenance planning and recording; and
- Continued to investigate additional programs:
  - » Subsea data collection
  - » Whale mitigation
  - » Unique animal identification; and
  - » Animal supply-chain traceability.





# Market Situation

## Australian Lobster Market Conditions

Volumes of western rock lobster exports recovered from the interruption early in the COVID-19 pandemic and beach prices also recovered. However further disruption to all Australian lobster exports occurred in late 2020 with a hiatus in the direct to China live trade forcing a rapid shift to identify and develop alternative markets, both domestic and export.

Trade and production statistics show that apart from periods of peak domestic demand, almost all western rock lobster production was once again traded internationally from 2021, albeit with relatively significant volumes making their way onto the domestic market particularly over the holiday season. A similar pattern was apparent with southern and tropical rock lobster exports.

A significant proportion of western rock lobster exports are now being sent frozen, either whole or as tails, particularly compared to other Australian rock lobster. However, 2024 export statistics reveal a reduced volume of frozen exports from Western Australia compared to 2023.

Beach prices of Australian lobster continue to reflect the volume and price points of alternative markets, combined with the continued increased supply chain costs associated with disruptions to the direct China market. The longer-term outlook for the lobster trade has recently turned more positive, with the thawing political relationship between Australia and China resulting in the recent announcement of the imminent resumption of the direct live trade.

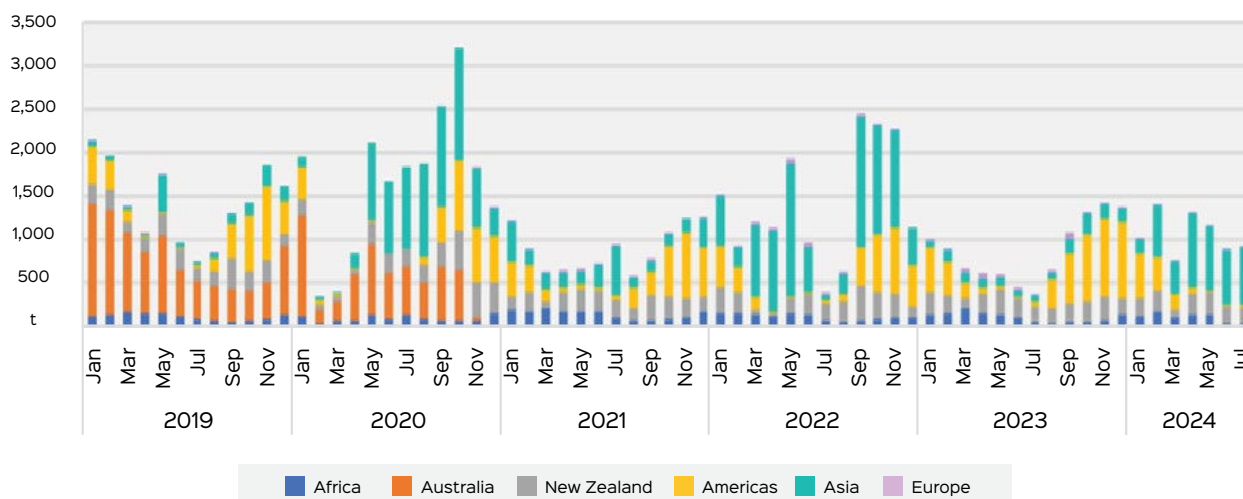
## Australian Exports

Analysis of Australian export trade shows that, in the absence of a direct live export market to China, all states experienced significant reductions in export volumes and export revenue. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that exports in 2023 were sent to a much wider array of countries than in 2019, albeit at significantly lower unit prices.

Using the pre-COVID year of 2019 as a baseline, total rock lobster export volumes and value for Australia overall are lower, from pre-COVID 2019 (8,923 tonnes with an export value of AUD762 million) to 2023 (8,343 tonnes with an export value of AUD474 million). This represents a 6% lower export volume, and a 38% lower export value in 2023 compared to 2019:

- Total export volumes for **Western Australia** have recovered to pre-COVID levels, although export value is lower: 2019 - 6,162 tonnes with an export value of AUD488 million; compare to 2023 - 6,244 tonnes with an export value of AUD309 million. This represents a 1% higher export volume, and a 37% lower export value.
- Total export volumes and value from **South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania** in 2019 - 2,138 tonnes with an export value of AUD227 million; compare to 2023 - 1,734 tonnes with an export value of AUD133 million. This represents a 19% lower export volume, and a 42% lower export value.
- Total export volumes and value from **Queensland** in 2019 - 492 tonnes with an export value of AUD38 million; compare to 2023 - 263 tonnes with an export value of AUD26 million). This represents a 46% lower export volume, and a 33% lower export value.

## China imports of non-frozen spiny lobster, quantity by origin, monthly



It is worth noting that the 2023 export volumes and value were considerably higher than 2022. The increases in export volume were driven by increases in Western Australia's exports which recovered to pre-COVID levels, together with a small increase in average export unit value.

**Live exports** continue to dominate Australia's lobster trade. In 2023, live, fresh or chilled exports represented 6,935 tonnes of a total 8,343 tonnes exported, or 87% of lobster exported from Australia. Noting that prior to 2020 about 99% of exports were sent live. In 2023 live exports represented:

- 79% of Western Australia lobster exports – 4,945 tonnes live, fresh or chilled of a total 6,244 tonnes
- 99% of (South Australia + Victoria + Tasmania) lobster exports – 1,722 tonnes live, fresh or chilled of a total 1,734 tonnes
- 89% of Queensland lobster exports - 235 tonnes live, fresh or chilled of a total 263 tonnes

The major destinations in 2023 for the 6,935 tonnes of **live, fresh or chilled** product exported from Australia (noting that these figures do not include re-export volumes) were:

- Hong Kong – 2,494 tonnes of Western Rock Lobster; 777 tonnes of Southern Rock Lobster; 15 tonnes of Tropical Rock Lobster
- Vietnam – 1,061 tonnes of WRL; 746 tonnes of SRL; 7 tonnes of TRL
- Taiwan – 875 tonnes of WRL

- Singapore – 224 tonnes of WRL, 75 tonnes of SRL, 11 tonnes of TRL
- Thailand - 44 tonnes of WRL; 1 tonne of SRL, 154 tonnes of TRL

**Frozen and chilled exports** from Australia have increased over the past few years, the majority being Western Australian product. Major destinations in 2023 for the 1,403 tonnes of frozen and chilled product exported from Australia (of which a historically high 1,298 tonnes came from Western Australia) included:

- China - 672 tonnes - including 661 tonnes of Western Rock Lobster
- USA - 187 tonnes - including 167 tonnes of WRL
- Taiwan - 193 tonnes - including 190 tonnes of WRL
- Singapore – 112 tonnes – including 85 tonnes of WRL
- Japan – 76 tonnes of WRL

The significant volumes of frozen and chilled product recorded entering China are perhaps indicative of the demand for high-quality safe product, which could be expected to grow over the longer term as more sophisticated consumers gain increased trust in China's increasingly sophisticated and widespread cold-supply chains.

# Maximum Economic Yield Model and Industry Benchmarking

In June 2022, the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) Committee endorsed the first version of the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery Maximum Economic Yield model. The MEY model is updated periodically to help inform the TACC process.

We define 'Maximum Economic Yield' or MEY as the catch or effort level that maximises profit for the fishery as a whole over a number of seasons. Maximum profit happens at the point when there is the largest difference between total revenues and total costs of fishing. MEY is informed by a sustainable catch framework, including the stock assessment which itself is updated annually by DPIRD. In most cases, MEY will be associated with a lower catch level (a higher level of biomass) than that associated with MSY (Maximum Sustainable Yield). MEY, along with other inputs and considerations, are used to inform TACC recommendations to the Minister for Fisheries.

The MEY model provides an economic evaluation tool that considers the costs of fishing, lobster biomass levels, expected catch rates and expected long-term price responses to long-term changes in supply (changes in annual quota). As an evaluation tool it can be used to assess ongoing impacts of changing quota and the expected profitability of industry.

The DPIRD stock assessment model projects lobster biomass levels and projected catch rates under different quota scenarios. For each level of quota, the assessment model is projected out 5-plus years, so the resultant biomass levels could be considered an equilibrium level, or in other words, the biomass that would be present if the fishery remained at that level of catch for an extended period.

The fishing cost components of the model are based on data collected through benchmarking interviews by the Western Rock Lobster Council with commercial lobster fishers for the season ended June 2024. This data represents an

important resource for the TACC Committee and also for fishers, particularly those who participate in the program.

The revenue elements of the model are based on two western rock lobster products (live and frozen) and their projected long term expected annual product mix and beach-price pricing outcomes, based on the experience and views of the five processors (99% market share) on the TACC Committee.

Versions of the model operate in Microsoft Excel and app environments, highlighting responses in the industry profit function to changes in user inputs - a link to the app can be found on the WRL website.

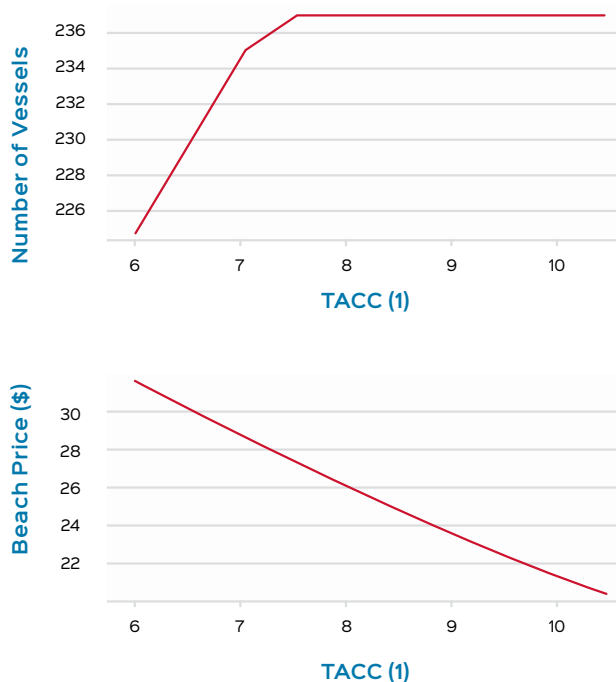
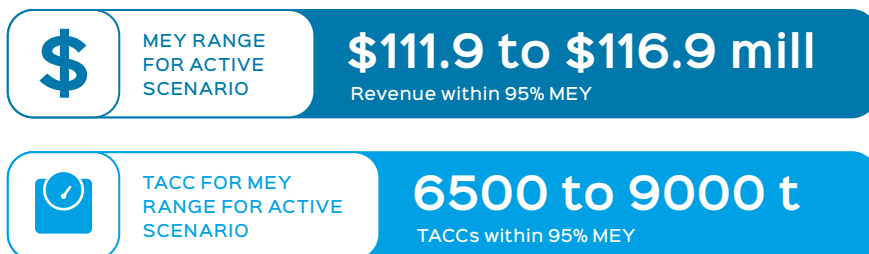
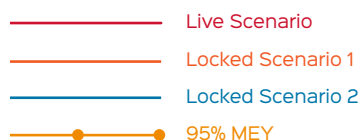
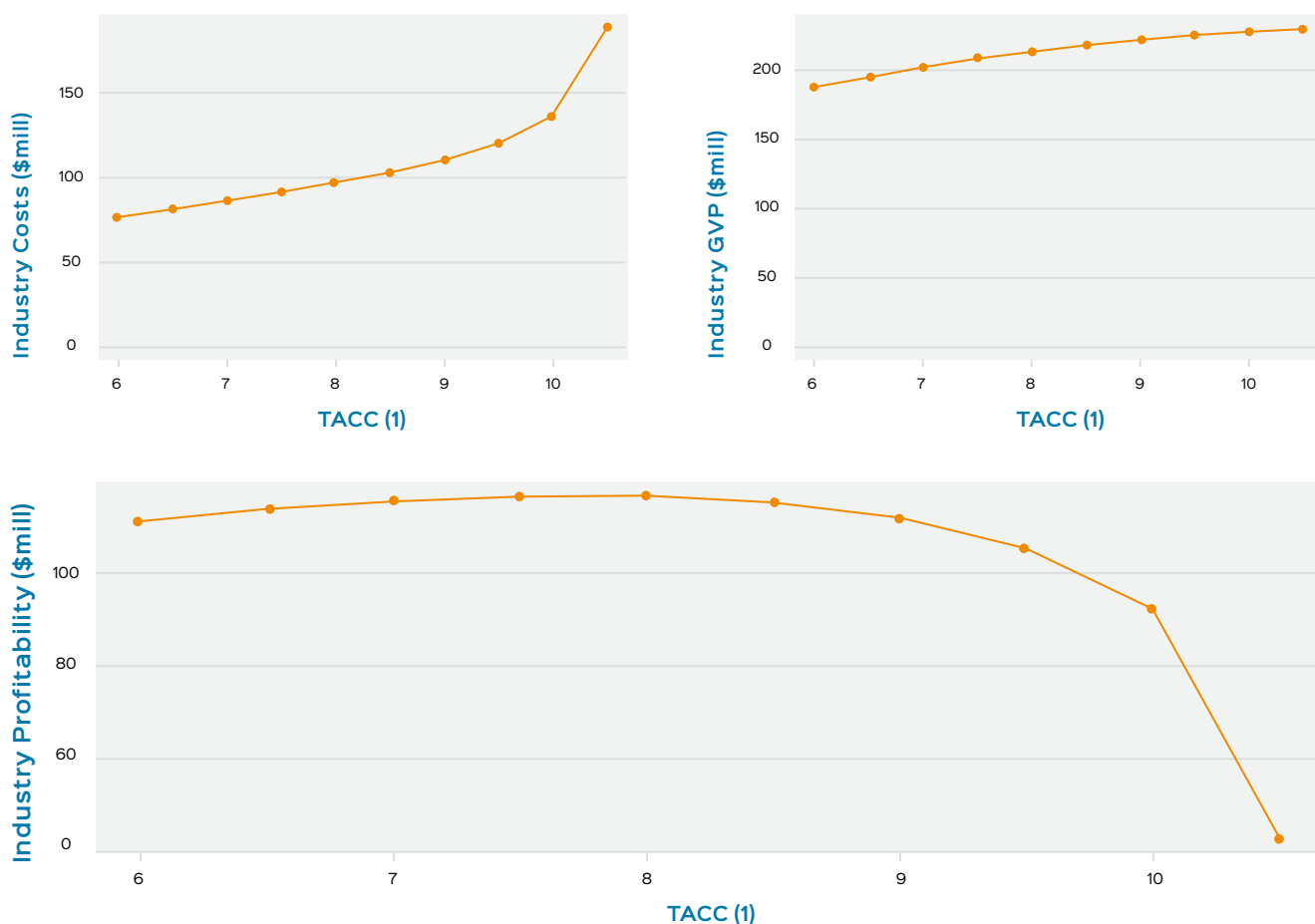




Figure 1 Snapshot of MEY model from the WRL website, representing the projected MEY for the 2023/24 season.



The model has been developed to help provide an evidence-based means of determining the optimal longer-term level of harvest for the commercial rock lobster fishery as a whole. It is necessarily reliant on judgement and informed opinion on market dynamics into an uncertain future. In reality, demand and supply for live western rock lobster change seasonally and indeed daily, and is further impacted by the availability of substitute products (rock lobster live and frozen; other species of lobster live and frozen, and other substitute products) and, in the longer term, by other economic drivers.

As a tool, the model generates outputs that enable an understanding to be gained of the likely set of industry-wide revenue and profit outcomes as a range of inputs and assumptions are altered. Hence it can substantially add to the understanding of position of MEY for the fishery and can be used to evaluate a range of alternative assumptions. As an evaluation tool it can be used to assess ongoing impacts of changing quota and the expected profitability of industry.



# Communications and Engagement

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WRL has made significant strides in strengthening its communications and engagement efforts, enhancing its connection with members, industry stakeholders and the broader community.

Through a series of initiatives, including the expansion of digital platforms, participation in key community events, strategic partnerships and the launch of new publications, WRL has successfully promoted the Western Rock Lobster industry while fostering greater awareness of its history, operations and encouraging local seafood consumption. These efforts have helped to reinforce WRL's role as a leader in industry engagement, driving positive outcomes for the fishery and the wider community.

## WRL Coastal Tour 2024

The 2024 WRL Coastal Tour took place in July, visiting Geraldton, Cervantes, and Fremantle. These meetings provided important updates on WRL's activities, including market access, resource access security and the repeal of ARMA. Members were encouraged to engage in benchmarking surveys and discussions around the annual TACC setting process, fostering collaboration and shared insights on industry trends.

## WRL and Back of Boat Websites

In July 2023, WRL launched a refreshed version of its website, [westernrocklobster.org](https://westernrocklobster.org), significantly enhancing user experience and navigation for members and stakeholders. This redesign focused on clarity and accessibility, with the website now dedicated to industry-specific information, ensuring members can easily find relevant updates, resources and event details. To better serve the public, WRL also introduced [backofboat.com](https://backofboat.com), offering recipes, sustainability information and community event details. This strategic restructuring has been well-received, with positive feedback on the improved functionality and digital forms that streamline administrative tasks, facilitating greater member engagement and participation in WRL activities.

## Lobster Tales Magazine

In September 2023, WRL launched its *Lobster Tales* magazine as part of its Communications Program, with two editions released to date—Summer and Winter. Featuring seasonal recipes, industry insights, fisher profiles and sustainability discussions, the magazine has become a valuable resource for both the public and stakeholders. Distributed at community events and Back of Boat activations, it has reached a broad audience, helping to educate the community and inspire confidence in cooking lobster at home. Developed in collaboration with local ambassador Kate Flower, *Lobster Tales* has quickly become a cornerstone of WRL's engagement efforts, with strong demand for print copies and a growing online presence.

## Community Events

Over the past year, WRL has engaged in key community events to promote the western rock lobster industry.

**Perth Royal Show 2023:** WRL returned to the Perth Royal Show for its second exhibition in September, effectively highlighting the leadership, operations and sustainability of the industry. The booth, located in the Farm 2 Food pavilion, provided an excellent opportunity for the community to connect and engage in meaningful conversations with commercial rock lobster fishers. This year's highlight was the launch of a new online ordering platform for Back of Boat (BoB), featuring live demonstrations to help visitors navigate the site smoothly. Families participated in an engaging experience that included cooking demonstrations, tastings, documentaries and lobster-themed crafts.



**Shore Leave 2024:** The annual Shore Leave Festival in Geraldton celebrates the Mid-West's local produce and culture. A highlight was the Abrolhos Long Table Lunch, where renowned Chef Scott Bridger showcased WRL's lobster along with other premium local seafood for over 200 guests. At the Beach Price Markets, festival-goers had the opportunity to purchase Back of Boat lobsters directly from a local fisherman, alongside a free lobster BBQ. The Beach Price Kitchen offered cooking demonstrations, including a session by celebrity chef Matt Stone, who shared his recipe using freshly caught western rock lobster. The festival attracted visitors from near and far, and WRL's involvement reinforced its commitment to promoting local seafood and fostering community connections.

These major events have provided WRL with the opportunity to educate a wider audience about the western rock lobster industry's sustainability and quality while emphasising the importance of the Back of Boat initiative. Such efforts continue to strengthen the industry's relationship with the community.

## Collaborations & Partnerships

WRL has proactively sought out opportunities to establish strategic partnerships, pooling resources to reach broader audiences through innovative methods and networks. These collaborative efforts have yielded high-quality and informative content related to the fishery and the industry, engaging partners with a wider community reach. Such partnerships have been developed with selected organisations and personalities that share target audiences and aligned values, thereby promoting the fishery and the industry more effectively.



Australian Hotels Association  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Australian Hotels Association

In 2023, WRL continued its partnership with the AHA WA to strengthen outreach within the hospitality sector. This collaboration provided valuable networking opportunities, boosting WRL's visibility at major industry events.



### West Australian Good Food Guide

WRL's partnership with WAGFG aimed to elevate the profile of Western Australian rock lobster among consumers and within the hospitality sector. Key initiatives included WRL's involvement as the exclusive presenter of the WAGFG's Best Pubs List and participation in events such as the Chardonnay & Seafood Lunch at Leeuwin Estate, showcasing rock lobster in curated dining experiences. Additionally, engaging content was created, including social media videos and editorial articles that highlighted the journey from catch to plate. This partnership has yielded significant media coverage and audience engagement, enhancing appreciation for WA's seafood.





### Marine Stewardship Council

Aligned with its commitment to sustainability, WRL collaborated with MSC to promote awareness of sustainable seafood practices and the importance of sourcing certified sustainable seafood through national campaigns. Participation in annual MSC initiatives, including Sustainable Seafood Week, World Ocean Day, and National Science Week, engaged a wider, relevant audience. WRL's efforts were highlighted in top-tier media outlets, including a feature story on the MSC website.



### Buy West Eat Best

WRL continue to strengthen its partnership with Buy West Eat Best, promoting locally sourced produce in Western Australia. Through ongoing collaboration and participation in initiatives such as the Plating Up WA campaign, WRL has showcased lobster dishes across various venues, significantly boosting visibility and audience engagement.

These strategic collaborations have effectively enhanced the promotion of western rock lobster, fostering connections within the hospitality sector and directly with consumers.

### Seven West Media

Building on the success and learnings from previous annual media campaigns, WRL continued its partnership with Seven West Media in 2023-2024. Together, we implemented a series of innovative, targeted campaigns designed to increase community engagement, boost awareness of western rock lobster's availability and accessibility, and foster community trust and acceptance. The collaboration utilised a mix of creative content, including social media videos, guest chef recipes, and informative features, to further solidify WRL's presence across multiple platforms and enhance its connection with the WA community.

### Community Engagement Competitions

WRL continued to strengthen community connections through two annual competitions: WA's Best Lobster Restaurant Competition and the WRL Photo Competition and Calendar. These initiatives promote local lobster consumption and celebrate the community's engagement with the industry. The restaurant competition, part of the WA Cray Day campaign, encourages voting for local establishments serving WA lobster, while the photo competition showcases creative connections to the industry, with winning images featured in a desk calendar distributed to key stakeholders and available to the wider community. Both competitions have grown in participation and are integral to WRL's ongoing communications efforts.



## Industry Governance

The Western Rock Lobster Council is committed to supporting the continual improvement of its governance and standards through investment in industry's on-going training and development.

WRL is dedicated to excellence in governance, prioritising transparency and accountability in its leadership and services. The WRL Board consists of elected fishery members who must complete either the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Company Directors Course or the Governance Institute of Australia's (GIA) Effective Director Course within a year of their appointment, ensuring they have strong governance competencies alongside their business and fishing expertise. The appointment of a highly qualified independent Chairperson, recognised as a leader in their field, and for their governance experience, has further strengthened WRL's leadership. WRL also invests in the development of future leaders through the Development Education Capacity Knowledge (DECK) Program and the Fishing Operations Committee, which includes young fishers, scientists, management, and the WRL CEO, chaired by a younger board member. This committee provides mentoring opportunities and enables young fishers to engage in industry governance and address current operational issues. WRL encourages member participation in industry committees and events on matters of national and international significance.

WRL provided bursaries to Mat Thompson and Matt Ottersen to attend the 2023 Ropeless Consortium in Halifax, Nova Scotia in October 2023. Further bursaries were awarded in September 2024 to Matt Ottersen and Eduardo Fernandes, to attend the Seafood Directions Conference held in Hobart.

WRL focus on providing information of high quality and usability to members and stakeholders, working to ensure the relevance, timeliness and clarity of information provided and consulted upon with members. This commitment to providing value is reflected in WRL's digital strategy, policy initiatives, and research programs, which serve the needs of the fishery and its members. The industry digital strategy aims to set a benchmark for other fisheries.

WRL continue to uphold a strong level of accountability for industry funds spent under current agreements with the state. Increasing transparency around government expenditure of industry funds to the same standard will help clarify potential financial and operational risks associated with industry-funded joint management of the fishery.

Strategic planning and risk management are top priorities for WRL. The directors regularly identify and assess the organisation's strategic objectives, risk register, and management strategies. Throughout 2024, the Board engaged in ongoing review of risks in light of current and emerging industry challenges, including the ongoing trade embargo with the People's Republic of China, spatial constraints, and the repeal of ARMA. In 2025, both the strategic plan and risk register will be comprehensively reviewed in preparation for the next five years.

# The Development Education Capacity Knowledge (DECK) Program

In October 2023, Western Rock Lobster (WRL) proudly hosted its fifth annual Development Education Capacity Knowledge (DECK) Program, an interactive industry forum designed to offer comprehensive professional development and learning opportunities for all members of the western rock lobster industry.

The event, held from midday on October 11 to midday on October 12 at the Fremantle Sailing Club, featured engaging sessions on key topics such as boat technology, governance, market trends, social licence, lobster biology, sustainability, financial planning and resilience. Jayden Mair from Global Marine Design discussed innovations in lobster boat design, Evy Yeo from KB Seafood Company offered insights into the role of lobster processors, and Courtney Bailey from Voconiq focused on community engagement and social licence, showcasing the diverse expertise shared throughout the program.

In addition to its educational content, the program facilitated networking through a relaxed dinner at Moore and Moore Cafe, where participants had the rare opportunity to interact with Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Fisheries, and Heather Brayford, Director General for DPIRD. The dinner fostered engaging discussions and meaningful connections between participants, industry leaders and peers.

The 2023 DECK Program welcomed 10 participants from across the coastline, representing locations such as Fremantle, Two Rocks, Lancelin, and Geraldton. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 100 percent of attendees expressing their intention to recommend the program and participate in future programs.

The DECK Program encourages its graduates to take a more comprehensive interest in their fishery by actively participating in industry activities such as local Professional Fishermen's Associations (PFA) meetings, nominating for the Fishing Operations Committee, attending conferences like Trans-Tasman Rock Lobster, ICWL and Seafood Directions, and engaging in leadership programs. By fostering this participation, WRL is committed to developing a strong and informed network that will drive the future of the western rock lobster industry.

The program is open to all WRL members, skippers, deckhands and commercial fishers, provided at no cost to participants, and with financial assistance available for travel and accommodation to ensure accessibility.

The 2024 DECK will take place from midday on Tuesday, October 15, to midday on Wednesday, October 16, in Geraldton.











# Annual Member and Stakeholder Survey

WRL's Annual Member and Stakeholder Survey helps our organisation monitor progress under our strategic plan, ensuring that we are maintaining confidence, sustainability and good governance in the western rock lobster industry.

In September this year, WRL conducted its seventh Annual Member and Stakeholder Survey. The survey helps our organisation measure our industry's attitude regarding economic confidence, investment appetite and membership satisfaction. The annual survey also allows WRL to collect data about the views of its members and stakeholders on the current management of industry affairs, communications and governance as well as future priorities of the western rock lobster industry. Repeating this survey annually allows WRL to assess changes in sentiment over time and react to emerging areas of concern or opportunity.

A key objective for WRL is to proactively manage industry risk, reputation and development. In order to build an ongoing indicator, the survey asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of a range of industry management activities including representation, communications and interaction. This year's survey reflects that industry confidence in WRL to proactively manage industry risk, reputation and development is a dependable 76%. This is a pleasing 4% increase over last year and the highest result since the annual member survey has been undertaken.

The western rock lobster industry's ability to attract and retain investment is identified in WRL's strategic plan. As in previous years, the questions surveyed our members' short and medium-term levels of confidence in the economic outlook of our industry. The results indicate members' confidence has unfortunately dropped slightly to 56% from last year's result of 60%. Note the survey was completed before the Prime Minister's October announcement of the resumption of live trade to China. When looking at investment intentions for the next 12 months, there has been virtually no change in terms of expected equipment investment or employing additional staff compared to the previous year.

Lastly, the survey results indicate that the highest rated priority tactic for maintaining a strong economic outlook are all very close and consistent with previous years. The order of priority remains 'ensuring access to the resource remains Australian owned', followed very closely by 'maintaining a well-managed quota' and 'resource access security' equal 2nd, with 'ensuring a strong working relationship between government and industry' rounding out the clear top 4.

WRL releases the full Annual Member and Stakeholder Survey Report just prior to Christmas each year.



# Back of Boat Lobsters

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The Back of Boat initiative continues to evolve, ensuring that the western rock lobster industry remains sustainable and accessible for all Western Australians. By fostering transparency and community engagement, it sets a benchmark for community connection within the broader seafood industry.

The Back of Boat Lobster (BoB) initiative, launched in September 2020, is a collaborative effort by Western Rock Lobster (WRL) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). Now well-established as the flagship initiative for community connection, this program redefines how Western Australians access local lobsters, allowing consumers to purchase live lobsters directly from fishing boats along the coast.

This pioneering program has received strong and growing support from the community, with feedback highlighting the joy of buying the freshest and best value lobsters straight from the fishers. Since its inception, over 150 tons of live lobster have been sold, with 108 different vessels participating. Together, they have landed more than 250,000 lobsters across 21 ports from Kalbarri to Mandurah. This significant community relationship reflects a strong desire for fresh seafood and a deeper connection to local fishers.

To accommodate rising demand, daily limits have evolved from 100 lobsters per landing to a current cap of 999 lobsters. This flexibility not only supports the community's desire for fresh lobsters but also fosters closer relationships between fishers and consumers, enhancing understanding and pride in Western Australia's premium seafood.

The success of the Back of Boat Lobster initiative was further validated when WRL won the Industry Promotion Award at the 2024 WA Seafood Industry Awards. This prestigious recognition highlights WRL's exceptional efforts in reconnecting the seafood industry with the local community and underscores the initiative's impact on promoting sustainable practices and local seafood consumption.

Throughout the year, WRL has hosted numerous BoB sales events, including those during the festive season. In December 2023 alone, nearly 27,000 lobsters were sold, with successful activations at five ports, including Mandurah, Port Coogee, Fremantle, Hillarys, and Cervantes. These events have allowed fishers and customers to bond over shared experiences, recipes, and stories.

WRL has been actively improving the online ordering and payment system for Back of Boat based on valuable feedback from fishers. This innovation has facilitated nearly 9,000 sales in December alone, streamlining the purchasing process while maintaining a personal connection between fishers and customers. WRL is also dedicated to onboarding more fishers onto the system, further enhancing the experience for both fishers and consumers.

At its core, Back of Boat Lobsters enhances positive industry perception and fosters trust through transparency and sustainability, meeting community desires for increased live lobster availability while connecting fishers and consumers through back-of-boat sales. The initiative strategically addresses vital priorities for the industry's sustainability and growth, including securing resource access rights, supporting the social licence to operate within the community, and fulfilling local demand at the best value.

[backofboat.com](https://backofboat.com)







# Financial Reports



Western Rock Lobster Council Inc

## Financial Reports

For the year ended 30 June 2024



# Directors' Declaration

The directors have determined that the company is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

The directors of the association declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes, present fairly the company's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements; and
2. In the directors' opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Independent Chair  
**Russell Barnett**



Chair, Finance & Audit Committee  
**Mat Thompson**

# Independent Auditor's Report to The Members

**For the year ended 30 June 2024**

## **To the Members of Western Rock Lobster Council Inc**

We have audited the financial report of Western Rock Lobster Council Inc. ('the Association'), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of comprehensive income, appropriation statement and statement of cash flows for the year 30 June 2024 then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion the financial report of Western Rock Lobster Council Inc. has been prepared in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act (WA) 2015, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its financial performance for the year ended 30 June 2024; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1, and the Associations Incorporation Act (WA) 2015.

## **Basis for Opinion**

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## **Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting**

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the registered entity's financial reporting responsibilities under the Associations Incorporation Act (WA) 2015. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

## **Responsibility of the Responsible Entities for the Financial Report**

The directors of the Association are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (WA) 2015 and the needs of the members. The Associations' responsibility also includes such internal control as the responsible entities determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial report, the directors are responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so. The directors are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.



## Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by responsible entities.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of responsible entities' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with responsible entities regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Name of Firm: Stirling Auditors  
Name of Director: En Khong  
Address: Suite 5, 216 Stirling Highway,  
Claremont WA 6010  
Date: 19 September 2024



# Statement of Financial Performance

For the year ended 30 June 2024

		2024	2023
	Note	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>			
DPIRD Direct Funding		411,371	525,450
2020-059 RD&E (New)		100,000	200,000
FRDC - IPA Project Funding		1,447,100	2,131,232
Industry Levy		220,200	217,200
IPA Management Fee		21,747	44,400
Loss/ Gain on Sale of Asset		8,911	-
<b>MSC Grant</b>	2	44,645	-
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>2,253,974</b>	<b>3,118,282</b>
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>			
Interest Income		38,449	7,106
<b>GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES</b>			
Small Business Hardship Grant		5,000	20,000
<b>TOTAL GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES</b>		<b>5,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>
<b>TOTAL OTHER INCOME</b>		<b>43,449</b>	<b>27,106</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>3,145,388</b>	<b>3,145,388</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Chair, Directors and Independent Director Fees	3	79,808	68,750
Depreciation		33,026	54,504
Employment Expenses	4	353,269	414,101
Industry Levy Expenses	5	355,064	143,863
IPA Project Expenses	6	1,758,584	1,719,979
Operating Expenses	7	231,873	212,372
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		<b>2,811,624</b>	<b>2,613,569</b>
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT)</b>		<b>(514,201)</b>	<b>531,819</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

# Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2024

		2024	2023
	Note	\$	\$
<b>RESERVES</b>			
Retained earnings		1,358,163	1,872,365
<b>Total Reserves</b>		<b>1,358,163</b>	<b>1,872,365</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	8	993,680	1,839,802
Reimbursement		11,572	4,931
Trade and Other Receivables	9	360,530	35,158
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>1,365,782</b>	<b>1,879,892</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Property, Plant and Equipment	10	126,328	112,671
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>126,328</b>	<b>112,671</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>1,492,110</b>	<b>1,992,563</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Provisions	11	102,300	70,329
Trade and Other Payables	12	31,647	49,869
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>133,947</b>	<b>120,198</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>133,947</b>	<b>120,198</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>1,358,163</b>	<b>1,872,365</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

# Appropriation Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2024

## RETAINED EARNINGS AFTER APPROPRIATION

Retained Earnings at Start of Year

Profit/(Loss) Before Taxation

Retained Earnings After Appropriation

	2024	2023
Note	\$	\$
	1,872,365	1,340,545
	(514,201)	(531,819)
	1,358,163	1,872,365

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.



# Statement of Cash Flows - Direct Method

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
Note	\$	\$
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
GST	(1,973)	(395)
Cash receipts from other operating activities	2,288,512	3,145,388
Cash payments from other operating activities	(2,778,598)	(2,559,065)
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(492,059)</b>	<b>585,928</b>
<b>INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Other cash items from investing activities	1,209,712	(608,649)
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>1,209,712</b>	<b>(608,649)</b>
<b>FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Other cash items from financing activities	17,224	12,718
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>17,224</b>	<b>12,718</b>
<b>NET CASH FLOWS</b>	<b>734,877</b>	<b>(10,003)</b>
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period	125,286	135,288
Net change in cash for period	734,877	(10,003)
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	860,163	125,286

# Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2024

## 1 Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

The director(s) have determined that the company is not a reporting entity and accordingly, this financial report is a special purpose report prepared for the sole purpose of distributing a financial report to members and must not be used for any other purpose. The director(s) have determined that the accounting policies adopted are appropriate to meet the needs of the members.

The financial report has been prepared on an accrual basis and under the historical cost convention, except for certain assets, which, as noted, have been written down to fair value as a result of impairment. Unless otherwise stated, the accounting policies adopted are consistent with those of the prior year.

The accounting policies that have been adopted in the preparation of the statements are as follows:

### Goods and Services Tax

Transactions are recognised net of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

2024	2023
\$	\$

## 2 MSC GRANT

MSC Grant

**TOTAL MSC GRANT**

44,645	-
<b>44,645</b>	<b>-</b>

MSC Grant is the assistance fund received from Marine Stewardship Council to help with the cost of Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) fees for recertification audits.

## 3 Chair, Directors and Independent Directors

Board Diem

Chair Honarium

Independent Directors

**TOTAL CHAIR, DIRECTORS**

**AND INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS**

40,000	35,000
24,808	15,000
15,000	18,750
<b>79,808</b>	<b>68,750</b>

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.



#### 4 Employment Expenses

Salaries & Wages

Superannuation

**TOTAL EMPLOYMENT EXPENSES**

2024	2023
\$	\$
315,490	373,768
37,779	40,333
<b>353,269</b>	<b>414,101</b>

#### 5 Industry Levy

Management and Projects

MSC Audit

Promotion, Media and Communication

**TOTAL INDUSTRY LEVY**

125,354	20,297
15,360	12,200
214,350	111,366
<b>355,064</b>	<b>143,863</b>

#### 6 IPA Project Expenses

Mileage (64600)

Project - 12th ICWL

Project - Communications

Project - Communications, Education and Engagement

Project - Digitising the Western Rock Lobster Industry

Project - 2021-030 Digital Transformation

Project - Understanding the Economics and Markets

Project - WA Institute Spiny Lobster Biz Plan

Project - 2020-059 RD&E

Project - 2020-060 WRL Professional Industry Development

Project - 2020-062 Minimising Plastic (Phase 1)

Provision for Leave Expense

Superannuation

**TOTAL IPA PROJECT EXPENSES**

-	2,260
11,620	42,799
-	11,670
288,087	286,528
-	273,669
1,151,188	600,254
151,601	251,817
-	34,159
89,643	126,981
27,627	42,944
3,267	5,403
(357)	8,989
35,907	32,506
<b>1,758,584</b>	<b>1,719,979</b>

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.



# Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2024

## 7 Operating Expense Breakdown

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Accounting/Audit	3,233	5,830
Bank Charges	1,081	944
Communications Strategy	6,334	7,339
Fringe Benefits Tax	6,416	6,634
Gifts	2,446	430
Insurance	18,784	8,187
Legal Costs	-	693
Meeting Expenses	5,242	2,588
Mileage	79	931
Motor Vehicle Expenses	5,332	7,044
Office Equipment and IT	13,739	18,118
Postage	528	1,201
Printing and Stationery	5,931	7,340
Provision for Leave Expense	32,328	10,467
Rent	69,943	62,429
Sponsorship & Promotions	-	2,309
Staff Amenities	4,344	3,490
Subscriptions	46,900	36,988
Telephone	6,374	6,348
Training	248	5,881
Travel & Accommodation	2,592	17,181
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE BREAKDOWN</b>	<b>231,873</b>	<b>212,372</b>

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.



## 8 Cash and Cash Equivalents

ANZ Business Online Saver
ANZ Cheque Account
ANZ FRDC Fund
ANZ Online Saver
ANZ WRLC 1916
ANZ Term Deposit 1
ANZ Term Deposit 2
CBA Term Deposit #1 Nov 2022
CBA Term Deposit #2 Nov 2022
Industry Fighting Fund Savings
Industry Fighting Fund Trans
<b>TOTAL CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS</b>

2024	2023
\$	\$
49,768	507,053
54,666	119,894
60,421	398,263
5,496	5,391
23,258	9,166
400,000	-
400,000	-
-	400,000
-	400,000
23	23
47	13
<b>993,680</b>	<b>1,839,802</b>

## Trade and Other Receivables

### 9 CURRENT

GST
Trade Debtors
<b>TOTAL CURRENT</b>
<b>TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES</b>

28,201	35,158
332,328	-
<b>360,530</b>	<b>35,158</b>
<b>360,530</b>	<b>35,158</b>

## Property, Plant and Equipment

### 10 MOTOR VEHICLES

Motor Vehicles At Cost
Accum. Depr. Motor Vehicles
<b>TOTAL MOTOR VEHICLES</b>

67,319	50,777
(14,025)	(29,399)
<b>53,294</b>	<b>21,379</b>

### OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Office Equipment At Cost
Accum. Depr. Office Equipment
<b>TOTAL OFFICE EQUIPMENT</b>

72,036	72,036
(72,036)	(72,036)
<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

### PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

Property Improvements
Accum. Depr Property Improvements
<b>TOTAL PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS</b>

169,458	169,458
(96,424)	(78,166)
<b>73,034</b>	<b>91,292</b>

### TOTAL PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

<b>126,328</b>	<b>112,671</b>
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These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

# Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2024

## 11 Provisions

### CURRENT

Provision for Leave

Provision for Leave (IPA Projects)

**TOTAL CURRENT**

**TOTAL PROVISIONS**

2024	2023
\$	\$
79,862	47,534
22,438	22,795
<b>102,300</b>	<b>70,329</b>
<b>102,300</b>	<b>70,329</b>

## 12 Trade and Other Payables

### CURRENT

Amounts Withheld

ANZ Credit Card

Superannuation Payable

Trade Creditors

**TOTAL CURRENT**

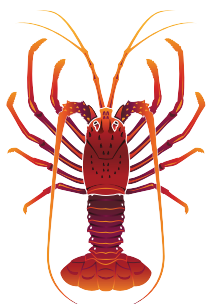
**TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER PAYABLES**

19,572	25,794
7,797	2,342
-	11,286
4,278	10,448
<b>31,647</b>	<b>49,869</b>
<b>31,647</b>	<b>49,869</b>

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.







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