

Chairman's summary

2019 AGM and 55th SRL Board Meeting

8 October 2019

2019 AGM

The AGM was held at the Holiday Inn at Melbourne Airport with 11 people in attendance, marking the 15th year of the existence of the company.

The Annual Report was adopted and is available on the SRL website.

Prof Caleb Gardner, Mark Fabris, Clive Perryman and Markus Nolle were re-elected to the SRL Board.

Project approvals

The Board considered four new project proposals including:

- *Improving Southern Rock Lobster on-vessel handling practices, data collection and industry tools for lobster quality assessment 2019-028.* This project had been conditionally approved at a previous meeting and with Board requested modification had been submitted to FRDC.
- *Minor Use Permit development for use of AQUI-S FN51868.* This project aimed to formulate the data needed to obtain a minor-use permit to enable the use of AQUI-S by the lobster industry in Australia was approved.
- *Examining the potential impacts of seismic surveys on octopus and puerulus larvae.* This project, previously rejected as being too expensive, had been resubmitted as a collaboration with the Vic and Tas RACs as well as a direct Oil and Gas industry financial contribution. The project was approved.
- *Development of a Post-Harvest Handling and Processing Training Program in China.* This project, fully funded by the Australia-China Agricultural Cooperation Agreement (ACACA) Program, aimed to train and educate Chinese SRL stakeholders on SRL best practices.

Sector Updates

SARLAC (North)

Kyri Toumazos provided the following summary of activity in the Northern Zone:

- The Northern Zone will be preparing its new harvest strategy to be completed in the next 12 months.
- There has been progress in re-gaining grounds that had been allocated to marine reserves through the marine scale reform process.

- Contribution to marine plastics is an issue for all marine users, including lobster fisheries. Priority should be given to initiatives that reduce plastic waste, and plastic production in the supply chain and in fishing inputs - gear, bait etc.

SARLAC (South)

Nathan Kimber provided the following summary of activity in the Southern Zone:

- There had been 85t of quota taken in the first seven days of 2019/2020 season.
- Catch rates were strong in all areas of the fishery.
- The size of fish varied considerably from south to north and there was a price split in play for fish over 2kgs.
- A Draft Management Plan, which included a new Harvest Strategy was soon to be release by the Minister for a two month period of Public Consultation.
- Significant time, money and expertise had gone into the development of the Plan, especially the Harvest Strategy.

As per the other jurisdictions the SARLAC raised the issue of marine debris and plastics and some of their ideas around how the issue could be best managed.

VRLA (East & West)

Markus Nolle provided the following summary of activity in the Victoria:

- TACCs set (for new 2019/20 quota period starting on 1 July 2019) at 40t EZ (down from 47t) and 245t WZ (up from 245t – an adjustment just to align with new CPUE/TACC tables).
- While there are still some concerns with stock depletion in the EZ, the WZ is showing good signs of improvement.
- FYI – catch stats are updated monthly and all other information is available here <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/rock-lobster/interactive-stock-assessment-report>.
- eCatch project (like Deckhand) is continuing. Trials for rock lobster and abalone are slated for April 2020.
- There is a Fishing Regs review under way. The VFA wants to include VMS on virtually all fishing vessels (including rock lobster vessels). This seems overkill given high compliance rates in the fishery.
- There is a significant Native Title Claim covering about 25% of Western Vic (including coastal waters) that has commenced. No clarity yet on impact to fishers.
- IMAS contract for science renewed for another 3 years.
- Klaas Hartman (IMAS) presented the revised Vic RL stock model at workshop in WA. Looks like a new ‘master model’ is going to be developed that could be adapted to all lobster stock modelling. Will be worth watching what happens in this space.
- Issues that VRLA would like to see leadership / oversight of from SRL are;
 - Biotoxin management / response / event recovery
 - Whale entanglement (response)

It was noted that SRL has a protocol and information sheet on whale entanglements which was currently under review.

TRLFA

John Sansom provided the following summary of activity in Tasmania:

- Statewide standardised CPUE up again. At 1.3 kg/pot lift from a low of 0.7 in 2011.
- Catch effort distribution now centres around May to July with 50% of TACC caught before summer. Traditionally 70% caught over the summer period.
- Tas at a stage where, as a result of rebuilt stocks, recreational groups are actively seeking a higher share of catch share arrangements.
- DPIPW have stated that they are seeking a higher return to the community from a public resource.
- State Government has chosen to do nothing to constrain recreational catch on the east coast. It is expected that, by default, commercial sector will incur a reduction to catch cap.
- Whale entanglement strategy developed and the TRLFA is willing to share with SRL members.
- Translocation program is in its third and final year. Industry concerns with stock levels in take sites. TRLFA Board has obtained preliminary data from IMAS that there are no significant differences with stock levels between take sites and non take sites. Review of program post AGM with industry ballot on further programs.
- The TRLFA is willing to share biotoxin management plan with SRL members.

ARLEA

Michael Blake provided the following summary of activity in the export sector:

- Michael Blake has been attending sector AGMs to pitch the concept of a marketing levy. Currently Tasmania and SANZ have agreed to the concept.
- SRL is a possible administrator of the marketing levy.
- The Known Consignor scheme came into operation on 1 March 2019 - the upcoming SA season will be the first under the scheme. All air cargo must be certified by a KC or a certified air freight forwarder.
- Certificates of origin from VECCL continue to be an issue for exporters as they are only available during regular working hours and half a day on Saturday.

FRDC update

Josh Fielding provided the following summary of the activity at the FRDC:

- The FRDC is currently in the process of formulating its RDE Plan 2020-2025. The SRL EO and Chair attended the stakeholder planning day in Adelaide in September.
- An independent review of the FRDC's partnership model by Forest Hill Consulting has been completed and is available for comment.
 - The main findings of the review were that the FRDC partnerships model was complicated and that stakeholders understand their own position but not other parts of the framework.
 - It is understood that the complexity has most likely built through an organic process to respond to market needs.

- Stakeholders are generally happy with IPAs and RACs, but less satisfied with subprograms.
- There is room for improvement from the FRDC in the extension space.
- The FRDC website is being updated to group together key information on issues that are important to industry eg. seismic, marine plastics.

SRL's role

Much of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of SRL's role as a peak body.

SRL's constitutional objectives are:

- to assist the Southern Rock Lobster Fisheries in South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania to value-add and market Southern Rock Lobster in such a way that members' practices and product are recognised as the best in the world;
- to maximise economic and social rewards for its members, communities and Australia; and
- to cooperatively identify and achieve the objectives of mutual benefit to its members.

These objectives are achieved through our research agenda in conjunction with an Industry Partnership Agreement with the FRDC.

SRL represented industry interests on several forums including:

- SRL's Clean Green Program
- SECC
- AMSA Industry Reference Group,
- Aquaculture and Wildcatch Skills Industry Reference Committee,
- SafeFish
- Seafood Trade Advisory Group
- Consultation with the Oil and Gas sector on seismic testing
- Partnership with Lobster Exporters New Zealand (LENZ) on marketing into China
- Several conference planning committees such as World Fisheries Congress 2020 and the International Lobster Congress .

The Board noted the importance of communicating SRL's progress and on updating industry on matters of mutual interest.

In the wider seafood industry landscape, SRL saw itself as a sector specific subset of the peak body - Seafood Industry Australia.

General

Next Trans-Tasman Congress

South Australia will be hosting the 2021 Trans Tasman congress. SRL has expressed interest in assisting on the planning steering committee.

Corporatisation Workshop Outcomes

SRL had facilitated a workshop on corporatisation of the industry on the 7th October 2019 prior to the AGM. This workshop considered consolidation in the industry as a consequence of the introduction of quota systems in our fisheries and the reduction in quota holder numbers. The following was noted:

- The workshop discussed various means of achieving increased employment, fishing efficiencies, regional growth by implementing management options and initiatives.
- The workshop had no agenda and wasn't seeking to change or regulate any aspects of the fishery.
- A report will be compiled by the EO reflecting the points of view of the meeting attendees.

Marketing Levies

- Michael Blake has attended the SANZRLFA and TRLFA AGMs to discuss a voluntary marketing levy for quota holders.
- The Board deferred a formal decision on the administration of the levy in the absence of stakeholders, but supported SRL being the administrator of the funds and associated governance.
- Decisions regarding the use of levy funds will be discussed at a later date, and subject to a formal governance structure.
- Industry has not funded any consolidated marketing approach for some time, and other sectors (prawn) have begun to experience benefits from a marketing levy.
- A robust tagging solution will assist in the branding of SRL and the industry is yet to have a solution that begins on vessels and is maintained all the way through to the consumer.

Professor Colin Buxton - SRL Chairman
October 2019